

The Nebraska ENGINEER legislative update

Nebraska Society of Professional Engineers- A state society of the National Society of Professional Engineers

NeSPE promotes the legislative interests of Nebraska's Engineering Profession

Legislative Update as of February 27, 2006

Important Notice

On Friday, February 24, 2006 the Natural Resources Committee advanced Legislative Bill 359 (a carry-over bill from last year) with a committee amendment, that proposes to remove the qualification that the Director of Natural Resources be a professional engineer and have five years experience in the position of responsibility in irrigation work.

In addition, LB 359 adds a section that the director shall:

- 1) have charge of the records of the department;
- 2) cause accurate and complete books of account to be kept;
- 3) supervise the signing of vouchers and orders for supplies, materials, and any other expenditures;
- 4) contract for consulting services;
- 5) employ all engineers, assistants, clerks, agents, advisors, technicians, and other employees required for the proper transaction of the business of the department and fix their titles, determine their duties and compensation, and discharge them in the discretion of the director;
- 6) sign and execute or supervise the signing and executing of all documents and papers;
- 7) work with the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission to develop and implement the policies and programs of the commission.

LB 1147 which was introduced this legislative session which proposed to remove all qualifications of the Director of Natural Resources was indefinitely postponed (killed) in committee in mid February. Attached, please find an Omaha World Herald editorial that opposes both LB 359 and LB 1147.

The Professional Engineers Coalition opposed both pieces of legislation on the basis that it is the mission of PEC to protect and promote public welfare and safety through the engineering profession. The Director of Natural Resources position demands a highly skilled individual and the requirement of a professional engineer ensures minimum education, professional experience, continuing education and licensure through the State of Nebraska. Through these requirements, professional engineers are trained in the decision making process based upon science, for the protection of the public's health, safety, and welfare. It is extremely important that the Director of Natural Resources fully understand the technical policies, standards, and regulation that govern the department. A Director capable of understanding complex issues of this department will be of greater benefit to the State of Nebraska when dealing with regional and multi-state issues that a pure political appointee may lack.

At this time, this message is being sent to you for informational purposes. The Professional Engineers Coalition is currently coordinating with Kissel E&S Associates (PEC's lobbyist) to determine strategy and all upcoming action steps necessary to defeat the advancement of LB 359.

Please do not hesitate to call the state office if you have any questions.