



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

101ST LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION

As Thursday was the last day for new bills to be introduced, today's Bill Summary includes all the bills that Voices for Children will be tracking throughout this legislative session. We have not yet identified our priority bills, and we will provide that in next week's update.

Upcoming Hearings

We do have an important hearing coming up on Wednesday, January 27th at 1:30 pm in front of the Judiciary Committee (Room 113). The following bills will be discussed:

- LB 800 (Ashford) – Includes provisions to address the following: civil citations for youth, graduated sanctions for certain/potential juvenile probation violations, truancy, the detention of status offenders, pre-disposition evaluations, Learning Community's response to truancy and re-engagement, and creates an At-Risk Student Task Force.
http://www.nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=9892
- LB 923 (Ashford) – Sealing of juvenile records
http://www.nebraskalegislature.gov/bills/view_bill.php?DocumentID=10009

Voices for Children is still working out our exact position on these bills, and we certainly welcome any input you may have.

Special Session Budget Cuts

I am including a link to reports submitted by the various state agencies and departments regarding budget cuts made during the Special Session. The reports detail where budget reductions will be made within the Departments. Please let me know if you have any particular concerns with information provided in these reports. Our hope and mantra throughout the Special Session was to keep cuts as far away from children and families as possible. We must continue that call as we review these reports, and as our state budget remains in a somewhat precarious position – cuts to programs critical to children and families continue to loom ominously on the horizon.

http://www.budget.state.ne.us/das_budget/bud/lb1reports.htm

LB 307 to Return to Committee

On Monday, January 11, Nebraska State Senator Brenda Council moved that her bill, LB 307 - a bill that would provide the possibility of parole for youth sentenced to life imprisonment for crimes committed under age of 18 - be taken off General File and recommitted to the Judiciary Committee. Provided Senator Council's motion passes, LB 307 will not be voted on this legislative session.

Voices for Children is a member of the Nebraska Coalition for the Fair Sentencing of Youth (CFSY). This Coalition advocates for the elimination of the sentence of life without the possibility of parole for youth. On the Coalition's website, you can learn more about juvenile life without parole in Nebraska, read the Statement of Principles, and sign up for periodic updates. <http://www.voicesforchildren.com/CFSY/NCFSY.html>.

As a member of the CFSY, we will continue our advocacy to eliminate the sentence of life without the possibility of parole for youth. The Coalition for the Fair Sentencing of Youth supports Senator Council in her decision to not pursue legislative action this year and will continue to work along with her and other senators to end the practice of locking up youth for life without any hope of parole.

Delaying legislative action will give us time as we continue to build the Coalition and develop relationships with Senators and other advocates. It will also allow us to take into account the upcoming U.S. Supreme Court decision in the cases of Florida v. Graham and Florida v. Sullivan, two youths who were sentenced to life without the possibility of parole at the ages of 17 and 13, respectively. To learn more about the Supreme Court and juvenile life without parole, see the following links:

<http://ejj.org/eji/childrenprison/deathinprison/sullivan.graham>

<http://articles.latimes.com/2009/sep/28/nation/na-court-preview28>

Otherwise, I hope next week's update will be more action-oriented, as we will have our priorities identified and be able to provide willing child advocates with further information and marching orders, should you be so inclined. As always, feel free to contact me if you feel there is something we are missing or you have any comments or questions.

Have a great weekend,

Tiffany Seibert
Policy Coordinator
Voices for Children in Nebraska
7521 Main Street, Suite 103
Omaha, Nebraska 68127
Phone: 402.597.3100 Ext. 109
tseibert@voicesforchildren.com
www.voicesforchildren.com