

# Nebraska State Legislature

**SENATOR MIKE HILGERS  
SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATURE**

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## COMMITTEES

Executive Board  
Legislative Performance Audit  
Legislature's Planning  
Reference  
Rules

December 29, 2021

To: Colleagues, Staff, and Interested Persons

From: Speaker Mike Hilgers *MH 21*

Date: December 29, 2021

RE: Procedural Modifications and Continuations for the 107th Legislature, Second Session

### Norris Legislative Chamber Access

Starting with the changes in the special session, we are continuing to reinstate normal procedures to the chamber although some restrictions remain. Specifically:

- The glass doors to the Rotunda will be accessible during session, in addition to the south door outside the Speaker's Office. Both the north and south cloak room doors will be inaccessible.
- The delivery of notes from the rotunda by the Sergeants will resume although some modifications may be implemented.
- There will be no members of the public or distinguished visitors allowed in the rear of the Chamber.
- Individuals permitted to enter the legislative Chamber will continue to be restricted. The list of persons who will have access to the Chamber will be limited to:
  - members of the Legislature,
  - the Clerk and necessary Clerk's Office staff
  - the Sgt. at Arms
  - the legislative pages
  - the State Patrol
  - the Legislative Services Coordinator
  - the Chairman of the Executive Board's staff

- the Speaker's staff
- any Legislative Technology staff when needed
- the Director of the Legislative Fiscal Office and other necessary division staff
- Legislative staff permitted on the floor, other than those identified earlier, will be contingent upon each bill under consideration or the immediate needs of a senator. This list has been broadened from previous practice:
  - The following staff will be allowed in the Chamber for the current bill and the next two bills on the agenda:
    - one staff member of the Principal Introducer of the bill and the Member who prioritized the pending bill
    - one staff member of an introducer of the present amendment/motion and the next 2 amendments/motions immediately following the present amendment/motion.
  - When a committee confirmation report on a gubernatorial appointment is being heard only the appropriate Committee Legal Counsel will be permitted in the Chamber.
  - Additionally, staff may be permitted onto the floor for specific needs that arise with a member. Examples of specific needs include the distribution of physical information or picking up and dropping off personal belongings. Staff permitted under these circumstances are not to remain in the Chamber and should leave the Chamber after the immediate need has passed. Only staff who are directly responsible for the present agenda item or the next 2 agenda items immediately following the present agenda item will be allowed under the balconies. Sergeants within the chamber will be asking staff sitting under the balconies who do not fall within the above criteria to leave the floor.

#### Media Access

- Media will continue to be allowed on the floor in a limited capacity. Once the daily limit of 5 media members on the floor has been met, subsequent media will be asked to conduct business from either balcony.

#### Balcony Usage

- Members who have been directly exposed to Covid-19 will be allowed to participate in debate from the east balcony. A microphone will allow these members to engage in the debate.

- The north and south balconies will be open to members of the public and members of the media. Signs will be posted encouraging social distancing and mask usage by those seated in these areas.

#### Doctor of the Day

- The Doctor of the Day Program will resume normal operations.

#### Prayer

- The Visiting Chaplain program will resume operations with some additional caveats. Chaplains are expected to check-in and remain in the sponsoring member's office when they first arrive. It will be the responsibility of members and their staff to escort the chaplain to the Norris Chamber no earlier than 5 minutes before the start of session. Once outside the Norris Chamber, the Sergeant at Arms will escort the chaplain to and from the legislative floor. Once the visiting chaplain has concluded daily prayer, the Sergeant at Arms will escort the chaplain out to the waiting staff of the sponsoring member.

#### Technology Issues

- Legislative Technology staff will not be sitting on the floor each day. For technology assistance, senators will need to notify Dick Brown, or another member of the Clerk's floor staff who will contact the manager of the Technology office who will then provide assistance to the senator.

#### Coffee, Tea, Water and Sponsored Food

- Pages will resume getting coffee, tea, and water for members.
- Food sponsored by groups or senators can be distributed to members of the Legislature in the Chamber.

#### Hearings and Executive Sessions

- The hearing rooms procedures, such as mask requirements and social distancing, will be enacted based on the discretion of the committee chair after consultation with the members of his or her committee.
- There will be no public usage of hearing rooms until the conclusion of the hearing room phase of session.

#### Submission of Testimony

- The practice of submitted written testimony for public hearings on a bill or resolution will be discontinued. Only in-person testimony will be accepted and appear on the committee statement.
- The submission of public comments to the online bill database will continue.

- The procedure for submitting position letters for inclusion as a permanent record of the public hearing record has changed. The submission of public comments to the online bill database will allow for the person submitting comments to request the comments to be part of the permanent hearing record if submitted prior to 12 p.m. CST the workday prior to the hearing. This is a new feature of the online bill database. The online bill database will be the only way to submit comments for inclusion as a public hearing exhibit. Letters and comments submitted via email or hand-delivered will no longer be included as part of the hearing record.