## LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA ONE HUNDRED SECOND LEGISLATURE SECOND SESSION

## **LEGISLATIVE BILL 954**

Introduced by Fulton, 29. Read first time January 11, 2012 Committee:

## A BILL

1	FOR AN AC	T relating to the educational savings plan; to amend
2		sections 85-1806, 85-1809, 85-1810, 85-1812, and 85-1814,
3		Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and sections
4		85-1801, 85-1802, 85-1804, 85-1807, and 85-1808, Revised
5		Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2010; to change
б		provisions relating to the plan; to redefine terms; to
7		change provisions relating to participants and
8		participation agreements; to harmonize provisions; and to
9		repeal the original sections.

10 Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

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Section 1. Section 85-1801, Revised Statutes Cumulative
 Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

3 85-1801 The Legislature finds that the general welfare and well-being of the state are directly related to educational 4 5 levels and skills of the citizens of the state and that a vital and valid public purpose is served by the creation and implementation of 6 7 programs which encourage and make possible the attainment of higher 8 education by the greatest number of citizens of the state. The state 9 has limited resources to provide additional programs for higher 10 education funding and the continued operation and maintenance of the state's public institutions of higher education, and the general 11 12 welfare of the citizens of the state will be enhanced by establishing 13 a program which allows parents and others interested in the higher 14 education of our youth to invest money in a public trust for future 15 application to the payment of <u>qualified</u> higher education <del>costs.</del> 16 expenses. The creation of the means of encouragement for persons to invest in such a program represents the carrying out of a vital and 17 valid public purpose. In order to make available to parents and 18 19 others interested in the higher education of our youth an opportunity 20 to fund future higher education needs, it is necessary that a public trust be established in which money may be invested for future 21 22 educational use.

Sec. 2. Section 85-1802, Revised Statutes Cumulative
Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

25 85-1802 For purposes of sections 85-1801 to 85-1814:

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(1) Administrative fund means the College Savings Plan
 Administrative Fund created in section 85-1807;

3 (2) Beneficiary means the individual designated by a
4 participation agreement to benefit from advance payments of <u>qualified</u>
5 higher education <u>costs expenses</u> on behalf of the beneficiary;

6 (3) Benefits means the payment of <u>qualified higher</u> 7 education <u>costs expenses</u> on behalf of a beneficiary by the trust 8 during the beneficiary's attendance at an <u>institution of higher</u> 9 <u>education;</u> <u>eligible educational institution;</u>

10 (4) Eligible educational institution means an institution 11 described in 20 U.S.C. 1088 which is eligible to participate in a 12 program under Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act of 1965;

13 (4) (5) Expense fund means the College Savings Plan 14 Expense Fund created in section 85-1807;

15 (5) Higher education costs means the certified costs of 16 tuition and fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for 17 enrollment or attendance at an institution of higher education. 18 Reasonable room and board expenses, based on the minimum amount 19 applicable for the institution of higher education during the period 20 of enrollment, shall be included as a higher education cost for those 21 students enrolled on at least a half time basis. Higher education 22 costs shall not include any amounts in excess of those allowed by 23 section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code;

24 (6) Institution of higher education means an institution
25 described in section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code which is

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1 eligible to participate in the United States Department of 2 Education's student aid programs; 3 (7) (6) Nebraska educational savings plan trust means the 4 trust created in section 85-1804; 5 (8) (7) Nebraska eligible educational institution of б higher education means an institution described in section 529 of the 7 Internal Revenue Code which is eligible to participate in the United 8 States Department of Education's student aid program and which is 9 located in Nebraska; 10 (8) Nonqualified withdrawal refers to a distribution from an account to the extent it is not used to pay the qualified higher 11 12 education expenses of the beneficiary or a qualified rollover 13 permitted by section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code; 14 (9) Participant or account owner means an individual, an 15 individual's legal representative, or any other legal entity 16 authorized to establish a savings account under section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code who has entered into a participation agreement 17 for the advance payment of <u>qualified</u> higher education <del>costs</del> <u>expenses</u> 18 on behalf of a beneficiary; 19 20 (10) Participation agreement means an agreement between a 21 participant and the Nebraska educational savings plan trust entered into under sections 85-1801 to 85-1814; 22 23 (11) Program fund means the College Savings Plan Program Fund created in section 85-1807; 24 25 (12) Refund penalty means the amount assessed by the

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State Treasurer for cancellation of a participation agreement or other refund which is not considered a de minimis penalty pursuant to section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code;

4 (12) Qualified higher education expenses means the 5 certified costs of tuition and fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for enrollment or attendance at an eligible educational 6 7 institution. Reasonable room and board expenses, based on the minimum 8 amount applicable for the eligible educational institution during the 9 period of enrollment, shall be included as qualified higher education 10 expenses for those students enrolled on at least a half-time basis. In the case of a special needs beneficiary, expenses for special 11 12 needs services incurred in connection with enrollment or attendance 13 at an eligible educational institution shall be included as qualified higher education expenses. Expenses paid or incurred in 2009 or 2010 14 for the purchase of computer technology or equipment or Internet 15 16 access and related services, subject to the limitations set forth in 17 section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, shall be included as gualified higher education expenses. Qualified higher education 18 expenses does not include any amounts in excess of those allowed by 19 20 section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code;

(13) Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code means such
section of the code and the regulations interpreting such section;
and, as such section and regulations existed on April 18, 2001; and
(14) Tuition and fees means the quarter or semester
charges imposed to attend an institution of higher education and

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1 required as a condition of enrollment. eligible educational
2 institution.

3 Sec. 3. Section 85-1804, Revised Statutes Cumulative
4 Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

5 85-1804 The Nebraska educational savings plan trust is 6 created. The State Treasurer is the trustee of the trust and as such 7 is responsible for the administration, operation, and maintenance of 8 the program and has all powers necessary to carry out and effectuate 9 the purposes, objectives, and provisions of sections 85-1801 to 10 85-1814 pertaining to the administration, operation, and maintenance of the trust and program, except that the state investment officer 11 12 shall have fiduciary responsibility to make all decisions regarding 13 the investment of the money in the administrative fund, expense fund, and program fund, including the selection of all investment options 14 15 and the approval of all fees and other costs charged to trust assets 16 except costs for administration, operation, and maintenance of the trust as appropriated by the Legislature, pursuant to the directions, 17 guidelines, and policies established by the Nebraska Investment 18 Council. The State Treasurer may adopt and promulgate rules and 19 20 regulations to provide for the efficient administration, operation, 21 and maintenance of the trust and program. The State Treasurer shall not adopt and promulgate rules and regulations that in any way 22 23 interfere with the fiduciary responsibility of the state investment officer to make all decisions regarding the investment of money in 24 the administrative fund, expense fund, and program fund. The State 25

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Treasurer or his or her designee shall have the power to: 1 2 (1) Enter into agreements with any institution of higher education, eligible educational institution, the state, any federal 3 or other state agency, or any other entity to implement sections 4 5 85-1801 to 85-1814, except agreements which pertain to the investment б of money in the administrative fund, expense fund, or program fund; 7 (2) Carry out the duties and obligations of the trust; (3) Carry out studies and projections to advise 8 participants regarding present and estimated future qualified higher 9 education costs expenses and levels of financial participation in the 10 11 trust required in order to enable participants to achieve their 12 educational funding objectives; 13 (4) Participate in any federal, state, or local 14 governmental program for the benefit of the trust; 15 (5) Procure insurance against any loss in connection with the property, assets, or activities of the trust as provided in 16 17 section 81-8,239.01; 18 (6) Enter into participation agreements with 19 participants; 20 (7) Make payments to institutions of higher education eligible educational institutions pursuant to participation 21 agreements on behalf of beneficiaries; 22 23 (8) Make refunds distributions to participants upon the termination of participation agreements pursuant to the provisions, 24 limitations, and restrictions set forth in sections 85-1801 to 25

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1 85-1814;

(9) Contract for goods and services and engage personnel
as necessary, including consultants, actuaries, managers, legal
counsels, and auditors for the purpose of rendering professional,
managerial, and technical assistance and advice regarding trust
administration and operation, except contracts which pertain to the
investment of the administrative, expense, or program funds; and

8 (10) Establish, impose, and collect administrative fees and charges in connection with transactions of the trust, and provide 9 10 for reasonable service charges, including penalties for cancellations, refund penalties, and late payments with respect to 11 12 participation agreements.

13 The Nebraska Investment Council may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to provide for the prudent investment of the 14 assets of the trust. The council or its designee also has the 15 16 authority to select and enter into agreements with individuals and entities to provide investment advice and management of the assets 17 18 held by the trust, establish investment guidelines, objectives, and 19 performance standards with respect to the assets held by the trust, 20 and approve any fees, commissions, and expenses, which directly or indirectly affect the return on assets. 21

Sec. 4. Section 85-1806, Reissue Revised Statutes of
Nebraska, is amended to read:

24 85-1806 The Nebraska educational savings plan trust may25 enter into participation agreements with participants on behalf of

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1 beneficiaries pursuant to the following terms and conditions:

2 (1) A participation agreement shall require a participant 3 to agree to invest a specific amount of money in the trust for the benefit of a beneficiary as allowed by section 529 of the Internal 4 5 Revenue Code. A participant shall not be required to make an annual contribution on behalf of a beneficiary, shall not be subject to 6 7 minimum contribution requirements, and shall not be required to 8 maintain a minimum account balance. The maximum contribution shall not exceed the amount allowed under section 529 of the Internal 9 10 Revenue Code. The State Treasurer may set a maximum cumulative contribution, as necessary, to maintain compliance with section 529 11 12 of the Internal Revenue Code. Participation agreements may be amended 13 to provide for adjusted levels of contributions based upon changed circumstances or changes in educational plans or to ensure compliance 14 15 with section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code or any other applicable 16 laws and regulations;

17 (2) Beneficiaries designated in participation agreements
18 shall meet the requirements established by the trustee and section
19 529 of the Internal Revenue Code;

20 (3) Payment of benefits provided under participation 21 agreements shall be made in a manner consistent with section 529 of 22 the Internal Revenue Code;

(4) The execution of a participation agreement by the
 trust shall not guarantee in any way that <u>qualified higher</u> education
 <u>costs expenses</u> will be equal to projections and estimates provided by

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trust or that the beneficiary named in any participation 1 the 2 agreement will (a) be admitted to an institution of higher education, 3 eligible educational institution, (b) if admitted, be determined a 4 resident for tuition purposes by the institution of higher education, 5 eligible educational institution, (c) be allowed to continue 6 attendance at the institution of higher education eligible 7 educational institution following admission, or (d) graduate from the 8 institution of higher education; eligible educational institution;

9 (5) A beneficiary under a participation agreement may be changed as permitted under the rules and regulations adopted under 10 sections 85-1801 to 85-1814 and consistent with section 529 of the 11 12 Internal Revenue Code upon written request of the participant as long 13 the substitute beneficiary is eligible for participation. as Participation agreements may otherwise be freely amended throughout 14 15 their term in order to enable participants to increase or decrease 16 the level of participation, change the designation of beneficiaries, 17 and carry out similar matters as authorized by rule and regulation; 18 and

19 (6) Each participation agreement shall provide that the 20 participation agreement may be canceled upon the terms and conditions 21 and upon payment of applicable fees and costs set forth and contained 22 in the rules and regulations.

23 Sec. 5. Section 85-1807, Revised Statutes Cumulative
24 Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

25 85-1807 (1) The State Treasurer shall deposit money

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received by the Nebraska educational savings plan trust into three 1 2 funds: The College Savings Plan Program Fund, the College Savings 3 Plan Expense Fund, and the College Savings Plan Administrative Fund. The State Treasurer shall deposit money received by the trust into 4 5 the appropriate fund. The State Treasurer and Accounting Administrator of the Department of Administrative Services shall 6 7 determine the state fund types necessary to comply with section 529 8 of the Internal Revenue Code and state policy. The money in the funds shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to 9 policies established by the Nebraska Investment Council. The program 10 11 fund, the expense fund, and the administrative fund shall be 12 separately administered. The Nebraska educational savings plan trust 13 shall be operated with no General Fund appropriations.

14 (2) All money paid by participants in connection with 15 participation agreements and all investment income earned on such 16 money shall be deposited as received into separate accounts within 17 the program fund. Contributions to the trust made by participants may only be made in the form of cash. All funds generated in connection 18 19 with participation agreements shall be deposited into the appropriate 20 accounts within the program fund. A participant or beneficiary shall 21 not provide investment direction regarding program contributions or 22 earnings held by the trust. Money accrued by participants in the 23 program fund may be used for payments to any institution of higher education. eligible educational institution. 24

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(3) The College Savings Plan Administrative Fund is

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created. Money from the trust transferred from the expense fund to 1 2 the administrative fund in an amount authorized by an appropriation 3 from the Legislature shall be utilized to pay for the costs of 4 administering, operating, and maintaining the trust, to the extent 5 permitted by section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. The 6 administrative fund shall not be credited with any money other than 7 money transferred from the expense fund in an amount authorized by an 8 appropriation by the Legislature or any interest income earned on the balances held in the administrative fund. The State Treasurer shall 9 transfer any money in the administrative fund on July 1, 2010, to the 10 expense fund on July 1, 2010, or as soon as administratively 11 12 possible. Any money in the administrative fund available for 13 investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant 14 to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds 15 Investment Act.

16 (4) The College Savings Plan Expense Fund is created. The expense fund shall be used to pay costs associated with the Nebraska 17 educational savings plan trust and shall be funded with fees assessed 18 19 to the program fund. The State Treasurer shall transfer from the 20 expense fund to the State Investment Officer's Cash Fund an amount 21 equal to the pro rata share of the budget appropriated to the Nebraska Investment Council as permitted in section 72-1249.02, to 22 23 cover reasonable expenses incurred for investment management of the 24 Nebraska educational savings plan trust. Annually and prior to such transfer to the State Investment Officer's Cash Fund, the State 25

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Treasurer shall report to the budget division of the Department of 1 2 Administrative Services and to the Legislative Fiscal Analyst the 3 amounts transferred during the previous fiscal year. The State 4 Treasurer shall transfer any money in the endowment fund on July 1, 5 2010, to the expense fund on such date. Transfers may be made from 6 the expense fund to the General Fund at the direction of the 7 Legislature. Any money in the expense fund available for investment 8 shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the 9 Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds 10 Investment Act.

Sec. 6. Section 85-1808, Revised Statutes Cumulative
 Supplement, 2010, is amended to read:

13 85-1808 (1) A participant may cancel a participation agreement at will. The trustee shall determine and collect a refund 14 15 penalty by deducting the refund penalty from the returned funds. 16 Collected refund penalties shall be deposited in the expense fund. by submitting a request to terminate the participation agreement. 17 Additionally, if a participant requests and obtains a nonqualified 18 19 withdrawal, the participation agreement shall be deemed canceled with 20 respect to the amount of the nonqualified withdrawal. A participation agreement shall not be deemed canceled if a participant requests and 21 obtains a distribution of his or her entire account balance for 22 23 qualified higher education expenses and subsequently closes his or her account. Furthermore, the State Treasurer shall have the power to 24 terminate, freeze, or suspend a participation agreement if he or she 25

1 determines that the participant provided false or misleading 2 information to the detriment of the trust, if the participant's 3 account has a zero balance, or if the State Treasurer is unable to 4 verify the identity of the participant.

5 (2) If a participation agreement is canceled for any of 6 the causes listed in this subsection, the participant shall be 7 entitled to receive the principal amount of all contributions made by 8 the participant under the participation agreement plus the actual 9 program fund investment income earned on the contributions, less any 10 losses incurred on the investment, and such distribution will 11 generally not be subject to federal tax penalty:

12 (2) Upon the occurrence of any of the following
13 circumstances, no refund penalty shall be levied by the trust in the
14 event of a refund or termination of a participation agreement:

15 (a) Death of the beneficiary <u>if the distribution is paid</u>
16 <u>to the estate of the beneficiary or transferred to another</u>
17 <u>beneficiary as set forth in subsection (10) of section 85-1809</u>;

18 (b) Permanent disability or mental incapacity of the19 beneficiary;

20 (c) The beneficiary is awarded a scholarship as defined 21 in section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, but only to the extent 22 the <u>refund distribution</u> of earnings does not exceed the scholarship 23 amount; or

24 (d) A qualified rollover is made as permitted by section25 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, except that if a qualified rollover

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is made into a plan sponsored by another state or entity, the participation agreement shall be deemed to have been canceled for

3 purposes of subdivision (8)(c) of section 77-2716 and federal 4 adjusted gross income shall be increased to the extent previously 5 deducted as a contribution to the trust.

6 (3) In the event of cancellation of a participation 7 agreement for any of the causes listed in subsection (2) of this 8 section, the participant shall be entitled to receive the principal 9 amount of all contributions made by the participant under the 10 participation agreement plus the actual program fund investment 11 income earned on the contributions, less any losses incurred on the 12 investment. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, 13 under no circumstances shall a participant or beneficiary receive a 14 refund or distribution that is more than the fair market value of the 15 specific account on the applicable liquidation date.

16 (4) If a participant cancels a participation agreement, 17 obtains a rollover into a plan sponsored by another state or entity, or obtains a distribution, a portion of which constitutes a 18 nonqualified withdrawal, the amount of the distribution, rollover, or 19 20 withdrawal will be subject to recapture of previous Nebraska state 21 income tax deductions as set forth in subdivision (8)(c) of section 22 77-2716. The transfer of assets among plans sponsored by the State of 23 Nebraska shall be considered an investment option change and not a 24 rollover.

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Sec. 7. Section 85-1809, Reissue Revised Statutes of

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1 Nebraska, is amended to read:

2 85-1809 (1) A participant retains ownership of all 3 contributions made under a participation agreement up to the date of utilization for payment of <u>qualified</u> higher education <del>costs <u>expenses</u></del> 4 5 for the beneficiary. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, any amount credited to any account is not susceptible to any levy, 6 7 execution, judgment, or other operation of law, garnishment, or other 8 judicial enforcement, and the amount is not an asset or property of either the participant or the beneficiary for the purposes of any 9 state insolvency or inheritance tax laws. All income derived from the 10 investment of the contributions made by the participant shall be 11 12 considered to be held in trust for the benefit of the beneficiary.

(2) If the program created by sections 85-1801 to 85-1814
is terminated prior to payment of <u>qualified</u> higher education <del>costs</del>
<u>expenses</u> for the beneficiary, the participant is entitled to receive
the fair market value of the account established in the program. <del>7</del>
<del>less any assessed refund penalty.</del>

18 (3) If the beneficiary graduates from an institution of 19 higher education eligible educational institution and a balance 20 remains in the participant's account, any remaining funds may be 21 transferred as allowed by rule or regulation, subject to the 22 provisions of section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, as well as 23 any other applicable state or federal laws or regulations.

24 (4) The institution of higher education eligible
25 educational institution shall obtain ownership of the payments made

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1 for the <u>qualified</u> higher education <del>costs</del> <u>expenses</u> paid to the 2 institution at the time each payment is made to the institution.

3 (5) Any amounts which may be paid to any person or 4 persons pursuant to the Nebraska educational savings plan trust but 5 which are not listed in this section are owned by the trust.

6 (6) A participant may transfer ownership rights to 7 another eligible participant, including a gift of the ownership 8 rights to a minor beneficiary. The transfer shall be made and the 9 property distributed in accordance with the rules and regulations or 10 with the terms of the participation agreement.

11 (7) A participant shall not be entitled to utilize any 12 interest in the Nebraska educational savings plan trust as security 13 for a loan.

14 (8) The Nebraska educational savings plan trust may
15 accept transfers of cash investments from a custodian under the
16 Nebraska Uniform Transfers to Minors Act or any other similar laws
17 under the terms and conditions established by the trustee.

(9) A participant may designate a successor account owner 18 to succeed to all of the participant's rights, titles, and interest 19 20 in an account, including the right to change the account beneficiary, 21 upon the death or legal incapacity of the participant. If a 22 participant dies or becomes legally incapacitated and has failed to 23 name a successor account owner, the participant's estate, acting through the participant's personal representative, shall be named the 24 25 successor participant.

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1 (10) Upon the death of a beneficiary, the participant can 2 change the beneficiary on the account, transfer assets to another beneficiary who is a member of the family of the former beneficiary, 3 4 or request a nonqualified withdrawal. 5 Sec. 8. Section 85-1810, Reissue Revised Statutes of 6 Nebraska, is amended to read: 7 85-1810 A student loan program, student grant program, or 8 other program administered by any agency of the state, except as may be otherwise provided by federal law or the provisions of any 9 specific grant applicable to the federal law, shall not take into 10 11 account and shall not consider amounts available for the payment of 12 gualified higher education costs expenses pursuant to the Nebraska 13 educational savings plan trust in determining need and eligibility 14 for student aid. Sec. 9. Section 85-1812, Reissue Revised Statutes of 15 Nebraska, is amended to read: 16 17 85-1812 (1) For federal income tax purposes, the Nebraska educational savings plan trust shall be considered a qualified state 18 19 tuition program exempt from taxation pursuant to section 529 of the 20 Internal Revenue Code. The trust meets the requirements of section 529(b) of the Internal Revenue Code as follows: 21 (a) Pursuant to section 85-1806, a participant may make 22 23 contributions to an account which is established for the purpose of meeting the qualified higher education costs expenses of the 24 designated beneficiary of the account; 25

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(b) Pursuant to section 85-1806, a maximum contribution
 level is established;

3 (c) Pursuant to section 85-1807, a separate account is
4 established for each beneficiary;

5 (d) Pursuant to section 85-1807, contributions may only
6 be made in the form of cash;

7 (e) Pursuant to section 85-1807, a participant or
8 beneficiary shall not provide investment direction regarding program
9 contributions or earnings held by the trust;

(f) Pursuant to section 85-1808, penalties are provided 10 on refunds distributions of earnings which are not used for qualified 11 12 higher education costs expenses of the beneficiary, made on account 13 of the death or disability of the designated beneficiary if the distribution is not transferred to another beneficiary or paid to the 14 estate of the beneficiary, or made due to scholarship, allowance, or 15 16 payment receipt as provided in section 529(b)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code in excess of the scholarship, allowance, or payment 17 <u>receipt</u>; and 18

(g) Pursuant to section 85-1809, a participant shall notpledge any interest in the trust as security for a loan.

(2) State income tax treatment of the Nebraska
educational savings plan trust shall be as provided in section
77-2716.

24 (3) For purposes of federal gift and generation-skipping
 25 transfer taxes, contributions to an account are considered a

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1	completed gift from the contributor to the beneficiary.
2	Sec. 10. Section 85-1814, Reissue Revised Statutes of
3	Nebraska, is amended to read:
4	85-1814 Nothing in sections 85-1801 to 85-1813 shall be
5	deemed to prohibit both resident and nonresident participants and
6	designated beneficiaries from being eligible to participate in and
7	benefit from the Nebraska educational savings plan trust and program.
8	It is the intent of the Legislature that funds and income credited to
9	the program fund are fully portable and may be used at any
10	institution of higher education. eligible educational institution.
11	Sec. 11. Original sections 85-1806, 85-1809, 85-1810,
12	85-1812, and 85-1814, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, and
13	sections 85-1801, 85-1802, 85-1804, 85-1807, and 85-1808, Revised
14	Statutes Cumulative Supplement, 2010, are repealed.