

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE

SECOND SESSION

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION 426

Introduced by Conrad, 46.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this resolution is to propose an interim study relating to public records requests to determine whether reports of the resistance of government entities to public record requests are representative or isolated. The study should determine whether any additional statutory reforms beyond Laws 2023, LB43, are justified in response to the Supreme Court's opinion in Nebraska Journalism Trust v. Dept. of Env't. & Energy, 316 Neb. 174 (2024), to ensure that the purposes of sections 84-712 to 84-712.09 are being met and that Nebraskans have prompt, unfettered, and robust access to open government.

Subdivision (1)(b) of section 84-712.03 allows for any person who is denied access to public records to petition the Attorney General for assistance in obtaining the requested records. This study should look to see how such requests are made by the public to the Attorney General and whether there is an online portal or some similar means to effectuate assistance. The study should also determine how many such requests have been accommodated or responded to by the Attorney General. The study should also determine what the Attorney General did in response to such requests, what the resolutions of the requests were, and how many such requests were made and served in the last several years.

Additionally, body-worn camera footage is presumed to be a public record, but is regularly withheld or released solely at the whim of police agencies. Legislative Bill 366, introduced in the One Hundred Eighth Legislature, First Session, would provide a very narrow expansion mandating release of body-worn camera footage in custody deaths after the conclusion of the statutorily required grand jury process. This component of Legislative Bill 366 was strongly resisted by law enforcement and prosecutors despite the strong public

interest in accessing such footage and law enforcement and prosecutors contradicted their position regarding body-worn camera footage more broadly as an accountability tool in news stories and legislative testimony during the hearing before the Judiciary Committee on Legislative Bill 1185, introduced in the One Hundred Eighth Legislature, Second Session. This study should also focus on what statutory reforms are necessary to provide for the public's right to access to police body-worn camera footage in instances in which the public interest is strong or when law enforcement releases such footage in part themselves.

In order to complete the purpose of this study, the committee shall obtain input from the public and impacted individuals regarding the subject matter of the study.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH LEGISLATURE OF NEBRASKA, SECOND SESSION:

1. That the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee of the Legislature shall be designated to conduct an interim study to carry out the purposes of this resolution.

2. That the committee shall upon the conclusion of its study make a report of its findings, together with its recommendations, to the Legislative Council or Legislature.