

Cavanaugh, McKeon cases entirely different

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On Tuesday, Jan. 20, we will begin Day 9 of the 60-day session and begin holding committee hearings in the afternoons. Most hearings will start at 1:30 p.m. each day. The mornings will be devoted to floor debate on carryover bills from last year that had unanimous committee support until 2026 bills begin to advance from committee.

The session began with a bang when Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh removed several posters from the Capitol walls on Day 1 that were part of the 250th celebration of our country's founding. The posters were provided by conservative non-profit PragerU and approved for installation by the Capitol Commission, which manages the Capitol and its grounds. I



MIKE
JACOBSON

was told Sen. Cavanaugh made comments that she believed President Trump was behind the exhibit. She has publicly stated that she also believed no permission had been granted for the exhibit. In fairness, the posters were not damaged and were stored in her office, but they were removed from the wall along the south corridor of the Capitol near her office (and mine). This was all captured on the Capitol surveillance system. Her actions were met with strong opposition. However, she was not arrested or charged at the time.

This was happening about the same time the Executive Board was considering the expulsion of Sen. Dan McKeon. In the end, Sen. McKeon chose to resign before his expulsion vote was taken. Many believe that Sen. Cavanaugh should face expulsion as well; however, they are two entirely different situations.

Sen. McKeon's proceedings

dealt with violations of the Legislature's workplace harassment policy. Changes made to the policy in the last few years strengthened protections against workplace harassment. Conversely, there is no specific legislative policy or penalties to address vandalism. This isn't to say that Sen. M. Cavanaugh might not face any consequences. Gov. Jim Pillen, as a member of the Capitol Commission, elevated the matter for outside legal investigation last week. The Lancaster County Sheriff's Office is investigating the situation and will work with the county attorney to determine if any charges are appropriate. Stay tuned.

On Wednesday, Gov. Pillen appointed Fred Meyer to serve as the District 41 state senator. Sen. Meyer previously served in the body after then-Sen. Tom Briese resigned to become state treasurer. Sen. Meyer will serve through the start of the session in January 2027 unless elected to the post. A District 41 special election will be held this year in conjunction with the regular Nebraska primary and general elections.

On the policy front, the Legislature debated two bills this past Friday that I opposed. The first bill, LB 463, introduced by Sen. Beau Ballard, would have required public schools to develop a cardiac arrest response plan, including the purchase of defibrillators. Originally, the bill included funding from a special fund, but that fund has been depleted, so no money was available. This created a classic unfunded mandate. I opposed the bill even if funding were available, but was especially opposed without the funding. The bill just barely moved forward with 25 votes, but it will need to survive two more rounds of debate. I will filibuster if necessary to stop this bill from passing.

The next item was a proposed

constitutional amendment to require the state to reimburse cities and counties for any unfunded mandates. Although I oppose unfunded mandates and agree they should be avoided, passing a constitutional amendment that fails to define them is unwise. Who decides what policies are unfunded mandates? Who determines the appropriate reimbursement amount? This could lead to unprecedented spending and legal challenges. I was a "no" vote. The bill only got 23 votes, so it died for this session.

On Tuesday, I will have three of my bills up for public hearings in the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. One bill, LB 717, updates banking laws to strengthen disclosures for finance companies and includes a variety of other provisions. LB 718 deals with changing requirements for CPA certification. LB 719 is a bill I brought for Lincoln County to amend the Rural Projects Act; it would allow the rail park to extend services, such as rail tracks and natural gas lines, on land owned by Union Pacific and still qualify for matching funds from the dollars already approved by the Legislature. I expect each bill to advance from the committee and be scheduled for floor debate very soon.

I am also pleased to announce that I submitted my paperwork this week to run for a second term. It has been a pleasure serving as your state senator, and I look forward to the opportunity to serve District 42 for another four years.

The Legislature will continue with bill introduction on Tuesday and Wednesday. After Wednesday, only bills introduced on behalf of the governor can be introduced. Please continue to reach out to me about issues important to you at 402-471-2729 or by emailing me at mjacobson@leg.ne.gov.