

Several new Nebraska laws go into effect

Written by Wauneta Breeze

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The Associated Press

Three months after Nebraska legislators adjourned the 2011 session, much of their work took effect Aug. 28, from a ban on remote distribution of abortion-inducing drugs to restrictions on picketing at funerals.

Unless otherwise specified, most laws approved by the Legislature are enforced three months after adjournment. This year that meant 159 new laws would take effect, or more than half of the 269 pieces of legislation approved this year.

Other provisions took effect immediately or on other dates specified by legislators, and Gov. Dave Heineman vetoed six bills - three were overridden.

Many of the laws dealt with hot-button issues, such as a new requirement banning Nebraska doctors from administering early stage abortion drugs through a remote setup. Under the law, doctors must be present when a patient is given drugs such as mifepristone and misoprostol.

Among the noteworthy laws that took effect in late August:

- Videotaping or live-streaming images of nude people in restrooms, locker rooms and other locations is a felony.
- Mothers will have the legal right to nurse children in public.

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- Police will not be able to stop motorists if they have an air freshener or other objects dangling from their rearview mirrors unless it substantially blocks the windshield.

Several laws approved this year were aimed at isolated problems the state has faced in recent years.

People who want to protest at funerals will have to stand at least 500 feet away from cemeteries or funeral homes, an increase from the previous 300-foot rule. The law is aimed at groups like the Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., whose members protest at high-profile and military funerals for what they say is America's acceptance of homosexuality.

The Legislature also approved a measure aimed specifically at spitting on a police officer, throwing feces at a prison guard or similar efforts to attack with bodily fluid. The offense is a misdemeanor, but it becomes a felony if the the defendant knowingly used fluids infected with HIV or other transmittable diseases.

Many of the most high-profile state laws this session aren't scheduled to take effect immediately. A major roads-funding bill signed into law will allocate roughly \$70 million a year over a 20-year period, but it doesn't start until 2013.

Entry fees for Nebraska state parks will increase next year, a measure intended to help with upkeep and maintenance.