

## **Summary of Legal/Legislative Actions**

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### **General Overview:**

The Nebraska Constitution, Article VIII, sets out the general principles upon which the property tax system is built. Specifically, section 1, subsection (1), states, “Taxes shall be levied by valuation uniformly and proportionately upon all real property and franchises as defined by the Legislature except as otherwise provided in or permitted by this constitution.” The Constitution further defines different principles for real property and personal property and provides for exemptions and preferential valuations.

### **Real Property:**

Nebraska Constitution Article VIII, section 1, subsection (1), directs that the property taxes imposed on real property shall be based upon valuations that are uniform and proportionate. However, for agricultural and horticultural land, section 1, subsection (4), provides that valuations need not be uniform and proportionate with other classes of real property, but must be uniform and proportionate upon all property within the class of agricultural and horticultural land. Classification changes are addressed in the following sections for agricultural and horticultural land and personal property. Over time, changes have also been made in the level of assessment at which property is taxed, as follows:

- a) For 1920 and prior years, property was assessed at 20 percent of its actual value;
- b) From 1921 to 1952, property was assessed at its actual value;
- c) From 1953 to 1955, property was assessed at 50 percent of its actual value;
- d) For 1956 and 1957, property was assessed at 50 percent of its base value;
- e) From 1958 to 1980, property was assessed at 35 percent of its actual value;
- f) From 1981 to 1991, property was assessed at 100 percent of actual value;
- g) From 1992 to 2006, property was assessed at 100 percent of actual value, with the exception of agricultural and horticultural land which was assessed at 80 percent of actual value;
- h) From 2007 to current, agricultural and horticultural land has been assessed at 75 percent of actual value.

### **Agricultural and Horticultural Land:**

1972: Constitutional amendment, Article VIII, section 1, subsection (5); Legislature is authorized to enact laws providing for the valuation of land actively devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses based on its agricultural or horticultural use without regard for other purposes and uses. Subsequently, the Legislature authorized special valuation.

1984: *Kearney Convention Center v. Board of Equal.*, 216 Neb. 292, 344 N.W.2d 620 (1984). Commercial property owners requested that their valuation be equalized with agricultural land which was assessed at a lower level of value.

1984: Constitutional amendment, Article VIII, section 1, subsection (4); agricultural land is defined as a separate and distinct class and authorized the use of any different approach to value agricultural land.

1985: LB 271, effective for 1986, adopted a method to value agricultural land according to a formula based on earning capacity. Income streams were averaged by county and the capitalization rate was fixed in statute. Earning capacity is not similar to the income approach to value as used in professionally accepted appraisal practices.

1987: Banner County v. State Bd. of Equal., 226 Neb. 236, 411 N.W.2d 35 (1987). While the constitution stated that agricultural land was a separate and distinct class of property, the constitution still required that all real and tangible personal property values be uniform and proportionate. Using the earning capacity formula to value agricultural land would have been allowable if the resulting values had been correlated to be proportionate with all other real and tangible personal property.

1989: LB 361 changed the assessment of agricultural and horticultural land so that the results could be adjusted to be uniform across county lines.

1990: Constitutional amendment was passed that defined agricultural land as a separate class of real property and removed from the uniform and proportionate clause, meaning that it need not be uniform and proportionate with OTHER CLASSES of property. However, the values of agricultural land must be uniform and proportionate within the class of agricultural land.

1991: In response to Banner County v. State Bd. of Equal., LB 404 was passed, which froze agricultural and horticultural values for tax year 1991 at the 1990 value, to give time to respond to the case. LB 320 was also passed, effective for 1992, which changed the assessment of agricultural land so that the capitalization rate used to set value is market derived. The capitalization rate was increased 25 percent so that the resulting values from the income calculation correlate to 80 percent of market value.

1992: LB 1063 required agricultural land to be valued at 80 percent of actual or market value. All other real property is valued at 100 percent of actual or market value.

2000: Bartlett v. Dawes County Board of Equal., 259 Neb 954, 513 N.W.2d 810 (2000). The Supreme Court ruled that the Tax Equalization & Review Commission could not adjust by market area to achieve inter-county equalization because market areas were not defined as a class or subclass under the statutes.

2001: In response to the Bartlett case, LB 170 provided a definition of class or subclass of real property as a group of properties that share characteristics not shared by those outside the class or subclass. The classification may be based on parcel use, parcel type, location, geographic characteristics, zoning, city size, parcel size, and market characteristics that affect market value.

2002: LB 994 required the Property Tax Administrator to prepare and issue a comprehensive study to determine the level of value of agricultural and horticultural land that is receiving special valuation.

2005: LB 261 eliminated the agricultural and horticultural land valuations boards and the land manual areas beginning January 1, 2006.

2006: LB 808 modified the special valuation (greenbelt) provisions of Nebraska law and made a number of procedural changes, effective January 1, 2007. Generally, the changes narrowed the

availability of special value, but the bill also eliminated agricultural zoning as a requirement for special value and phased out the requirements of recapture over three years. Under LB 808, agricultural and horticultural land means that an entire parcel must be primarily used for agricultural or horticultural purposes. Agricultural or horticultural purposes means that the property is used for the commercial production of any plant or animal product in a raw or unprocessed state that is derived from the science and art of agriculture, aquaculture, or horticulture.

2006: LB 968 decreased the assessment percentage for agricultural and horticultural land from 80 percent to 75 percent of actual value beginning January 1, 2007.

2008: LB 777 redefined agricultural and horticultural land, effective January 1, 2009. These changes were made in response to issues that developed following the implementation of LB 808 in 2007. LB 777 amended Neb. Rev. Stat. §77-1359 so that any land associated with any building or enclosed structure located on a parcel will not be considered agricultural and horticultural land. However, the remaining land on the parcel after the exclusion of the land associated with the buildings must be primarily used for agricultural and horticultural purposes in order to be valued as agricultural and horticultural land.

### **Personal Property:**

1967: After the November 1966 vote which changed the Constitution, the Legislature repealed the head and poll taxes, exempted household goods, clothing and other personal items, and exempted intangible personal property such as stocks, bonds and certificates of deposit.

1970: A constitutional amendment gave approval to the Legislature to classify and exempt personal property.

1972-1974: The Legislature partially exempted from taxation agricultural income-producing machinery and equipment; business inventory; livestock; grain and seed; and poultry, fish and fur-bearing animals. The Legislature provided for a 12.5 percent exemption of actual value for calendar year 1973. The exemption increased by 12.5 percent each year until a total of 62.5 percent was exempt in 1977. Political subdivisions were reimbursed for the tax revenue loss resulting from these exemptions. In 1974, the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled that personal property tax exemptions were constitutional, *Stahmer v. State*, 192 Neb. 63, 218 N.W. 2d 893 (1974).

1977-1981: The Legislature completely exempted from taxation the classes of personal property that had been partially exempted except business inventory and livestock, which were fully exempted in calendar year 1978. The Legislature appropriated \$58.6 million as personal property relief to reimburse local governments for the losses resulting from these exemptions. Business inventories became totally exempt for calendar year 1979 and a reimbursement of \$62.2 million was appropriated for fiscal year 1979-1980. Livestock became totally exempt in calendar year 1980 and a reimbursement of \$70 million was appropriated for fiscal year 1980-1981.

1982: The Legislature eliminated the Personal Property Tax Relief and the Government Subdivision Fund. LB 816 provided for the distribution of aid to community colleges, natural resource districts, incorporated municipalities, counties, and for aid to school districts from the School Foundation and Equalization Fund.

1985: The Employment and Investment Growth Act (LB 775) was enacted by the legislature and provided new economic development incentives and benefits such as sales tax exemption of manufacturing machinery and equipment, income tax credits, and exemption of personal property tax for qualifying equipment.

1986: Car line companies began requesting that their personal property be equalized with all personal property, *Trailer Train Company v. Leuenberger*, 885 F.2d 415 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir. 1988), *aff'g*, CV87-L-29 (D. Neb. 1987). Citing protection under the 1976 Federal Railroad Revitalization and Regulatory Reform Act (4-R Act), the car line companies argued that since much of the personal property in Nebraska was exempted from taxation by the Legislature (inventory, agricultural machinery and equipment, earth-moving equipment, etc.), their personal property was being taxed to a greater degree than other personal property in Nebraska. The 8<sup>th</sup> Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the Nebraska property tax on personal property of car companies violated the 4-R Act. The State was prohibited from collecting property tax on car companies.

1987: Railroads filed suit against Nebraska arguing that the property tax on railroad personal property violated the 4-R Act. The litigation was settled in 1989, before reaching trial, resulting in the railroad companies paying tax on 25 percent of their value attributed to personal property for 1987, 1988, and 1989.

1988: LB 1091 created a one-time appropriation to reimburse local governments for any losses attributable to the railroad's 4-R Act litigation that exceeded one percent of expected property tax dollars. After line item vetoes and partial overrides, the amount appropriated to the fund from the Cash Reserve Fund totaled \$7.7 million.

1988-1990: Centrally assessed companies such as pipelines, telecommunications, and airlines appealed to the State Board of Equalization requesting equalization of their personal property with the exempt property of car companies and railroads. The companies were denied by the State Board and appealed to the Nebraska Supreme Court based on the Nebraska constitutional requirement of uniform and proportionate values for the levy of property taxes.

1989: The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled in favor of four pipeline companies for the 1988 tax year, and the State Board equalized their personal property value to zero. In July 1991, the Nebraska Supreme Court ruled on the tax year 1989 equalization requests of centrally assessed companies. The court found that equalization was not an appropriate remedy. All previous personal property exemptions were declared unconstitutional, effectively overturning the 1974 decision allowing personal property exemptions. As a result of the court's decision on the 1989 cases the State Board reduced the 1990 certified values of the appealing centrally assessed companies by 18.81 percent. See *Northern Natural Gas Co. v. State Bd. of Equalization and Assessment*, 232 Neb. 806 (1988) and *Trailblazer v. State Board of Equalization and Assessment*, 232 Neb. 823 (1989).

1991: LB 829 exempted all personal property from property tax for 1991 only and reimbursed local governments for the loss using a series of revenue-raising proposals including a depreciation surcharge, a temporary reduction in the sales tax collection fee, extending the sales tax to manufacturing energy, and a one-year increase in the corporate occupation tax. The total cost was \$120 million.

1992: Constitutional amendment LR 219CA was adopted and removed personal property from the uniform and proportionate clause of the constitution. It authorized personal property to be either taxed on actual value or net book value while allowing reasonable classifications to be exempt, and set apart a classification for the properties of entities that are protected by federal law, such as railroads. The Legislature passed LB 1063 and the "net-book" concept of taxing depreciable tangible personal property was adopted, rather than taxing personal property based on actual value.

1993: The Nebraska Supreme Court ruled on the appeal of the State Board of Equalization and Assessment's action which reduced the 1990 certified values of the appealing centrally assessed companies by 18.81 percent. The court upheld the State Board of Equalization's remedy which was to refund the difference in tax the appellants would have been required to pay if all of the exempt property in question had been placed on the tax rolls and taxed. *See MAPCO Ammonia Pipeline, Inc. V. State Bd. Of Equalization and Assessment*, 242 Neb. 263 (1993).

1994: LB 961 exempted livestock from the personal property tax.

2005: LB 312, the Nebraska Advantage Act, was passed, providing new economic development incentives and replaced Employment and Investment Growth Act (LB 775 1985). Benefits include sales tax exemption of manufacturing machinery and equipment, income tax credits, and exemption of personal property tax for an investment of at least \$10 million and the hiring of at least 100 new employees. Eligible personal property includes certain aircraft, main frame business computers for business information processing, depreciable personal property used for distribution facilities to store or move products, and depreciable personal property in a single project if the personal property is involved directly in the manufacture or processing of agricultural products.

2007: LB 334 modified definitions to exclude trade fixtures from the definition of real property. Trade fixtures are now defined as personal property.

2008: LB 1027 provided a personal property exemption for agricultural and horticultural machinery and equipment utilized by a qualified beginning farmer or livestock producer in their operation. The beginning farmer must be certified by the Department of Agricultural and apply for the personal property exemption with the county assessor on or before December 31 in the year preceding the exemption. The beginning farmer must file their personal property return on or before May 1, and if the exemption application is approved, the county assessor may exempt taxable agricultural machinery and equipment up to a maximum of \$100,000 in any one year. A properly granted exemption will continue for period of three years if a personal property return is filed on or before May 1 of each year.

#### **Other Property "Assessment Structure" Changes:**

1995: LB 490, effective for 1996, changed the property assessment calendar so that statewide equalization was completed before property valuation notices are sent to individuals. An individual may then protest his or her property valuation to the county board of equalization.

1995: LB 490, effective for 1996, created the Tax Equalization and Review Commission to replace the State Board of Equalization and Assessment for purposes of equalization of property valuations. In addition to its constitutional statewide equalization duties, the Commission

replaced the district court for the purpose of hearing individual appeals from decisions of the Property Tax Administrator, Department of Motor Vehicles, or the county board of equalization involving the valuation and taxation of property. Commissioners are appointed by the Governor and serve six-year terms.

1995: LB 490, effective for 1996, established acceptable ranges for the level of value for each class of property for purposes of the Tax Equalization and Review Commission's statewide equalization of real property. The acceptable ranges for the level of value were then 74 to 80 percent of actual value for agricultural land and 92 to 100 percent for all other real property.

1995: LB 490, effective for 1996, also created the position of Property Tax Administrator as a statutory position to oversee the Property Tax Division of the Department of Revenue. The powers and duties of the Tax Commissioner relating to valuation and taxation of property were transferred to the Property Tax Administrator. The Property Tax Administrator is appointed by the Governor and approved by the Legislature to serve a six-year term.

1997: LB 269, effective July 1, 1998, gave the county board authority to vote by resolution to have the Property Tax Administrator assume the county assessment function. The state would become fiscally responsible for the assessment functions in that county. The county assessor and employees of the assessor's office in those counties became state employees. Currently, nine out of 93 counties have turned the assessment function over to the state.

1998: LR 45CA placed four separate constitutional amendments on the 1998 general election ballot as follows: (1) strike the requirements that motor vehicle taxes be distributed to local governments in proportion to property taxes levied, (2) provide for the merger or consolidation of cities and counties, (3) limit the property tax exemption for government property to property used for a public purpose, and (4) strike all references to townships in the Constitution. The first three amendments succeeded while the fourth failed.

1999: LB 36, 1999 First Special Session, made the former Property Tax Division of the Department of Revenue a separate agency called the Department of Property Assessment and Taxation, directed by the Property Tax Administrator.

2001: LB 271 passed in 1999 and implementation was delayed until 2001. Beginning January 1, 2001, property of the state and its governmental subdivisions that is not used or not being developed for a public purpose is taxable, based on Constitutional Amendment to Article VIII, section 2, subsection (1). Previously, all governmentally owned property, no matter how used, was exempt from property taxation.

2003: Following the implementation of LB 271, a number of political subdivisions took issue with the taxation of property and appealed the taxability of certain governmentally owned property. In 2003, both the Nebraska Supreme Court and Nebraska Court of Appeals issued decisions on this issue. See, *City of Alliance v. Box Butte Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 265 Neb. 262 (2003), *Brown Cty. Ag. Society v. Brown Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 11 Neb. App. 642 (2003), *City of York v. York Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 266 Neb. 297 (2003) [York I], *City of York v. York Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 266 Neb. 305 (2003) [York II], and *City of York v. York Cty. Bd. of Equal.*, 266 Neb. 311 (2003) [York III]. Although each case deals with a separate factual situation, it appears that the courts have taken a fairly expansive view of what constitutes a "public purpose" under LB 271. If, for example, the political subdivision is authorized to use its property in a particular way, that

use constitutes a public purpose for the purposes of being exempt from property taxes, even if the property is also being used for an ongoing nonpublic use. Further, if a public purpose is advanced by the ownership of the property by the political subdivision, that use will be deemed to predominant, even if there is another, ongoing nonpublic use being made of the property. The courts did not specifically address the question of whether the mere generation of proceeds for the political subdivision through the use of its property would be sufficient to maintain the exempt status of the property.

2005: LB 66 passed which provides for a valuation preference rather than a complete exemption for historically significant real property that has been renovated or rehabilitated. The law limits the preference to properties deemed “historically significant” as opposed to any real property over a certain age. There is an application and approval process with the State Historical Preservation Officer (SHPO) for the real property to be deemed historically significant and revolves around the National Register of Historic Places. A “preliminary certificate” must be obtained and is the step that sets the “base value” for the property. When the work on the real property is complete, a certificate of rehabilitation is issued and the property is to be assessed at no more than its base value for eight years. In years 9-11, market value is increased incrementally until at the beginning of year 12, the value for the property is at actual value. The valuation benefit only applies to real property for which a final certificate of rehabilitation has been issued (by the SHPO) after January 1, 2006.

2006: LB 968 decreased the assessment percentage for agricultural and horticultural land from 80 percent to 75 percent of actual value beginning January 1, 2007. For purposes of the Tax Equalization and Review Commission’s statewide equalization of agricultural and horticultural land, the acceptable range for the level of value was changed to a range of 69 percent to 75 percent.

2007: LB 334 merged the Department of Property Assessment and Taxation with the Department of Revenue and established a Property Assessment Division. The legislation amended more than 150 sections of statutes to strike references to the former Department of Property Assessment Division and Property Tax Administrator and replaced them with references to the Department of Revenue and Tax Commissioner. The Property Assessment Division is directed by the Property Tax Administrator, who is appointed by the Governor, with the approval of a majority of members of the legislature. The Property Tax Administrator serves under the general supervision of the Tax Commissioner.

2007: LB 334 required county assessors to review properties on a cycle to assure that all parcels have been inspected and reviewed at least every six years.

2008: LB 965 amended Neb. Rev. Stat. [§76-214](#) so that beginning January 1, 2009, the Real Estate Transfer Statement, Form 521, became a single part form, rather than a multi-part form. The Real Estate Transfer Statement, Form 521, is required to be filed with the Register of Deeds when a deed to real estate, memorandum of contract, or land contract is presented for recording.

2009: LB 121 returned the nine state assessment offices back to the counties. All counties must be returned by 2013.

## **Other Property “Tax Policy” Changes:**

1996: LB 1114 imposed levy limits on all local governments to limit the total property tax rate (excluding exceptions) to \$2.24 per \$100 of taxable value beginning in 1998 and \$2.13 when fully implemented in 2001. Exceptions were for bonded debt, grandfathered building fund projects for schools, grandfathered capital lease purchases, and voter-approved overrides. Another crucial change was the concept of allocated levies, where counties were responsible for including the levy of small miscellaneous governments within the 45 cent limit of the county.

1996-1997: LB 299 imposed certain budget limits. For all political subdivisions, except schools and SID's 5 years old or less, the budget limit for restricted funds for fiscal year 1996-1997 was two percent plus population growth. For fiscal year 1997-1998 the budget limit was the prior year's total of restricted funds, plus population. For school districts the budget limit for general fund expenditures, other than special education, for fiscal year 1996-1997 was two percent plus the percent increase in the number of students. For fiscal year 1997-1998 the budget limit was the prior year's general fund expenditures, other than special education, plus the increase in students. There were certain statutory exceptions to the limits and provisions to exceed the limit by one percent that required a 75 percent vote of the governing body.

1996: LB 1177 created the Municipal Equalization Fund and provided for aid to municipalities that are unable to raise the average amount of property tax revenue per capita with the average property tax levy. The bill also allowed counties to levy a sales tax of up to one and one-half percent to support the county share of jointly provided public safety services.

1997: LB 269 did the following: (1) changed the levy limits for community colleges not to exceed seven cents for fiscal year 1998-1999 and fiscal year 1999-2000 and six cents for fiscal year 2000-2001 and all subsequent fiscal years, (2) created a new equalization formula for funding community colleges that makes up for any differences between the maximum levy times the valuation for the area and 40 percent of the total spending allowed to the area, (3) provided for levy allocation by municipalities for Community Redevelopment Authorities, city airport authorities and other entities created by cities, and (4) divided municipalities into three different size groupings for purposes of the state's city equalization formula, which was created by LB 1177 in 1996.

1998: LB 695 provided an equalization aid program for counties. The program distributes about \$6 million annually to counties that are unable to generate the average number of dollars per road mile by levying a uniform local effort rate provided for in the bill. The bill also provided that counties receive \$35 per day for state prisoners held in county jails, a program which was originally budgeted to receive \$6 million of funding.

1998: LB 1120 created an aid program for rural and suburban fire protection districts that cooperate by setting a uniform tax rate to finance these services in the great majority of any one county. The aid amount is \$10 per resident within the agreement. The annual cost is about \$2.5 million.

1999: LB 881 used the Cash Reserve Fund to provide for specific property tax relief programs. For 1999, \$30 million was distributed to community colleges based on valuation.

1999: LB 881 (tax credit for 2000) also provided \$25 million for the Relief to Property Taxpayers Act. The Act provided direct local property tax relief to all taxable real property owners in the form of a tax credit that is displayed on the tax statement. The credit, for year 2000, provided \$30.54 in property tax relief for every \$100,000 in taxable value. In other words, for every \$100,000 in taxable value, the state will pay the local taxing subdivisions \$30.54 that otherwise would have been collected from the taxpayer. Due to state budget constraints, the Legislature did not appropriate any monies to the Relief to Property Taxpayers Act in 2001 and subsequently repealed the Act in 2002.

2006: Effective June 15, 2006, in accordance with final orders issued pursuant to LB 126 (2005), all Class I school districts (elementary grades only) and Class VI high school districts (high school grades only) were dissolved and merged into school systems that offer kindergarten through grade 12. Nebraska's approximate 469 individual base school districts decreased to 254 school systems for 2006. This legislation was repealed by voters in the 2006 November election but it did not automatically reinstate the school districts as they existed prior to implementation of LB 126. Instead, the 2007 legislative session provided the enabling statutory language for Class I or Class VI schools to exist or be created again.

2006: LB 968 eliminated the termination date for the increase in the school levy to \$1.05 per \$100 of taxable value and the levy limit will remain at \$1.05 rather than returning to \$1.00 in 2009.

2007: LB 342, known as the Community College Foundation and Equalization Aid Act, amended provisions governing distribution of state aid appropriations among the state's six community college areas and amended provisions governing the property tax levy authority of community colleges.

2007: LB 367 created the Property Tax Credit Act, which provides direct local property tax relief to all taxable real property owners in the form of a tax credit that is displayed on the tax statement. The real property tax credit is based upon the valuation of each parcel of real property compared to the valuation of all real property in the state. The total amount of credit available for statewide distribution is \$105 million for year 2007 and \$115 million for year 2008. The credit, for year 2007, provided \$83.22 in property tax relief for every \$100,000 in taxable value. Meaning, for every \$100,000 in taxable value, the state pays the local taxing subdivisions \$83.22 that otherwise would have been collected from the taxpayer.

2009: LB 315 funded the Property Tax Credit Act for two additional years. The total amount of credit available for statewide distributions was \$115 million for 2009 and \$115 million for year 2010.

### **State Aid to Education (TEEOSA):**

1990: The Legislature enacted LB 1059, the Tax Equity and Educational Opportunities Support Act (TEEOSA). LB 1059 increased the sales tax rate from four percent to five percent and the income tax rates by eight and one-half percent for 1990 and an additional eight and one-half percent for 1991 to fund the Act. This landmark school finance legislation dramatically increased state aid distributed to schools in an "equalized" manner. School costs were calculated per student within nine "tiers" or groups of similarly-sized schools and the formula enabled each school district to finance the average cost per student for the tier with a combination of state aid

and property taxes at a defined “local effort rate”. The rate varied based on the amount of appropriation available. LB 1059 also “rebated” 20 percent of the income tax paid by residents of the district to the school district. Total cost when fully implemented was about \$210 million. The purpose of LB 1059 was to provide additional state aid to schools, reduce the reliance on property taxes to fund public education, and to try to remedy inequities in educational fiscal resources for students. While the formula for distributing state aid has been adjusted several times since 1990, measuring each school district's ability to generate revenue through property taxes remains an important component in the school aid formula.

1994: LB 1290 required the adjusted value or full assessable property valuations to be determined for each school district, by the Department of Property Taxation and Assessment, for use in the school aid formula. This provision "levels the playing field" and prevents a school district from receiving an unfair advantage in the school aid formula if their property valuations are at a lower level than other school districts.

1996: The Legislature enacted LB 1050 which revised the school aid formula to: (1) limit the amount of income tax rebate to \$82 million, (2) change the distribution of Insurance Premium Tax dollars from per student to being included as part of the equalization aid program, and (3) created an incentive for schools that consolidate.

1997: LB 806 revised the school aid formula by eliminating the tiers created in LB 1059 (1990) and providing for only three cost groupings: sparse, very sparse, and standard. The bill also provided for allocation or calculation of the budget for Class I schools that are part of a Class VI system or are affiliated with another K-12 district, thus integrating the levy of each “system” into the levy limits of LB 1114 (1996). Finally, the bill increased the appropriation for the school aid by \$110 million.

1998: LB 149 changed school finance such that the amount of school aid to be provided by the state is to be the full amount needed to fund all calculated needs for schools, assuming the local effort rate is equal to 10 cents less the levy limit.

2002: LB 898 statutorily reduced the calculated needs of schools by about one and one-quarter percent for 2002-2003 through 2004-2005 to reduce school aid by about \$22 million.

2006: LB 968 changed the required level of assessment for agricultural and horticultural land from 80 percent to 75 percent of actual value for purposes of the 2006 school adjusted value, which is used in calculating school aid for 2007-2008. This change was intended to make the agricultural and horticultural land value used in the 2007-2008 school aid formula consistent with the “assessed” value of agricultural and horticultural land in 2007 which moves to 75 percent of actual value.

2008: LB 988 amended Neb. Rev. Stat. [§79-1016](#), changing the required level of assessment for purposes of “adjusted value” used in the state’s school aid formula. The Property Tax Administrator is required to adjust the taxable value of each school district so that: 1) all real property, other than agricultural and horticultural land, is adjusted to 96% (*instead of 100%*) of actual value; and 2) all agricultural and horticultural land is adjusted to 72% (*instead of 75%*) of actual value, and all agricultural and horticultural land that receives special valuation pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. [§77-1344](#) is adjusted to 72% (*instead of 75%*) of the value of the land for its agricultural or horticultural purposes only.

### **Motor Vehicles:**

1997: LB 271 changed the method for taxation of motor vehicles to a uniform, statewide tax and fee system rather than according to value. The fee is a nominal amount, generally between \$5 and \$30 and the proceeds are distributed to cities and counties based on the Highway Trust Fund dollars. The motor vehicle tax is determined from a table that begins with the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) and declines each year thereafter, using a table found in state law. Responsibility for motor vehicle taxation was shifted from the county assessor to the county treasurer.

1998: LR 45CA amended the constitution, eliminating the requirement that motor vehicle taxes be distributed to local governments in proportion to property taxes levied.

1999: LB 142 implemented part of LR 45CA by providing that the proceeds from the motor vehicle tax be distributed 60 percent to the school district where the vehicle is registered, 22 percent to the county, and 18 percent to the city except in Douglas County where the city-county shares are reversed.

### **Homestead Exemption:**

1969: The Homestead Exemption Act was created by the Legislature to provide direct property tax relief to individual owners of residential property. This law, with some exceptions, provided for an exemption of \$800 of actual value for residences valued at \$4,000 or more. A homestead is defined as a residence, and the land surrounding, not to exceed one acre. To qualify, the homestead must be occupied by the owner of record on January 1 of the year for which application for exemption is made. The exemption applies to all or part of the local property taxes levied against the home, with the state reimbursing local governments from general fund revenues for the taxes exempted under the program. In 1971 and 1973, the legislature increased the benefits of the homestead exemption for specific categories of veterans, disabled, and elderly homeowners with limited income.

1983: LB 396 eliminated a general homestead exemption that exempted the first \$800 of value of a homestead valued at \$4,000 or more. The cost savings was \$4.7 million.

1984: LB 809 adopted a general homestead exemption of \$3,000 and required property tax statements to reflect that the state was financing the exemptions. This was estimated to cost about \$18 million. However, the program was delayed and then repealed after one year, never having been implemented.

1986: LB 1268 provided for a sliding scale for homestead exemption benefits for elderly and disabled beneficiaries as income increased.

1988: LB 1105 eliminated the sliding scale of benefits for homestead exemptions and provided that those with income below the filing threshold of \$10,400 received the full \$35,000 exemption.

1989: LB 84 granted an eight and one-half percent reduction in property valuation, or a \$5,400 general homestead exemption for 1989 only, the reductions to be financed by the state. Total cost was \$114 million.

1994: LB 802 enacted significant changes to the homestead exemption program: redefined household income, increased the amount of exemption, required the filing of an income statement, placed limits on the value of the home for which an exemption application is made, and implemented a sliding scale that allows partial exemption as income increase. Overall, these changes were revenue neutral.

1999: LB 179 increased the homestead exemption income eligibility amounts and expanded the definition of disability for purposes of eligibility. The cost of the expansion was \$8.8 million.

2004: LB 986 changed the definition of multiple amputees for certain veterans eligible for exemption for applications filed in 2004 and after.

2006: LB 968 made changes to increase the benefits available under the homestead exemption program, effective for 2007. The exempt amount was increased from the greater of \$40,000 or 80 percent to the greater of \$40,000 or 100 percent of the average residential home value in the county. For disabled veteran beneficiaries, the exempt amount increased from the greater of \$50,000 or 100 percent to the greater of \$50,000 or 120 percent of the average residential home value. The maximum value also increased from \$95,000 or 150 percent to \$95,000 or 200 percent of the average residential home value. The maximum value for handicapped and veteran claimants also increased a comparable amount.

2009: LB 94 made changes to allow applicants for the homestead exemption to file an application or certification up until the first half real estate taxes become delinquent if they missed the June 30 filing dates because of a medical condition.

2009: LB 302 made changes to allow the homestead exemption claimant to transfer a homestead exemption to a new homestead without having to sell the original homestead.

### **Documentary Stamp Tax:**

All transfers of beneficial interest in, or legal title to, real estate are subject to a documentary stamp tax based upon the value of the real estate transferred. The tax is due at the time the deed is offered for recording unless specifically exempt pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. [§76-902](#).

1965: Chapter 463, established the documentary stamp tax. The tax is collected by the register of deeds and remitted to the Department of Revenue. The initial rate was \$0.55 per each \$500 of value or fraction thereof. The register of deeds retained 25 percent of the proceeds of the sale of stamps to be placed into the county general fund.

1985: LB 236 raised the rate to \$1.50 per each \$1,000 of value or fraction thereof. The register of deeds retained 33 1/3 percent of the proceeds of the sale of stamps to be placed into the county general fund.

1992: LB 1192 raised the rate to \$1.75 per each \$1,000 of value or fraction thereof. The register of deeds retained \$0.50 from each \$1.75 collected to be placed into the county general fund.

2005: LB 40 raised the rate to \$2.25 per each \$1,000 of value or fraction thereof. The register of deeds retains \$0.50 from each \$2.25 collected to be placed into the county general fund. For each remaining \$1.75 remitted to the state, \$0.25 is credited to the Homeless Shelter Assistance Trust Fund, \$1.20 is credited to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and 30¢ is credited to the Behavioral Health Services Fund.