Last week the League hosted its annual “Jam the Unicam” state government affairs conference in Lincoln. There were fifty-six attendees representing eighteen Nebraska credit unions. The half day conference began with lunch at the Governor’s Residence where Governor Pete Ricketts spoke to attendees about the Administration’s legislative priorities and the state of the State. Following lunch, there was a great lineup of speakers including NCUA Region 4 Supervisory Examiner Steve Worden, Nebraska Department of Banking Director Mark Quandahl, Banking Committee Chairman Senator Brett Lindstrom, League Lobbyists Julia Plucker and Brandon Luetkenhaus, an advocacy panel including several Nebraska credit union professionals, and former State Senator Colby Coash who urged credit unions to tell their story to candidates and lawmakers. The conference concluded with a reception for State Senators at Billy’s Restaurant.

In the Legislature last week, floor debate was stalled on LB 449, a bill introduced by Senator Ernie Chambers of Omaha that dealt with prairie dogs. When the bill failed to pass, the rest of the agenda paid the price and very little was accomplished. That ended the Legislature’s third full week of the 2018 Legislative Session and the last full week of the short session (recess days and holidays every week until adjournment). Public hearings on newly introduced bills will continue through February 27, 2018. Much discussion among senators and lobbyists is centering on which bills will be chosen as priority bills. The reality in this short session is that any bill that doesn’t have a “priority” designation or is unfit for “consent” calendar will likely not see floor debate time.

The Legislature was on recess yesterday but returns today to floor debate in the morning hours and Committee work in the afternoon. This week there are two bills that we are monitoring in Committee:

- LB 828 introduced by Sen. John Lowe (LD 37) would adopt the Empowerment Savings Account Act. Allows for special accounts for students (k-12) that are on free-reduced lunch and at a school classified at lowest performance level established by the State School Board. The accounts are funded by a school district (3% of the average spent per pupil). Funds may be used for online programs approved by Dept. of Education, Educational therapy or services, tutoring services, testing fees and banking fees charged for the management of accounts.
- LB 947 introduced by Sen. Jim Smith (LD 14) on behalf of Governor Ricketts to provide tax relief via property taxes and income taxes. The bill would provide tax credits to homeowners and land owners who are residents of Nebraska. Those who own land but are not residents would see no relief. It would lower the top rate of income tax on individuals from 6.84% to 6.69% and the corporate rate from 7.10% to 6.69% over two years.