



Attorney General Doug Peterson

NEWS RELEASE

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MEDIA RELEASE
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Attorney General Doug Peterson Releases 2015 Legislative Package: Announces Comprehensive Legislation on Human Trafficking and Drugs

Lincoln – Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson today announced his legislative priorities for the 2015 legislative session. Peterson’s priority legislation reflects his commitment to protecting the most vulnerable and supporting Nebraska’s law enforcement and county attorneys. LB294 introduced by Senator Jim Scheer, strengthens the ability of law enforcement and prosecutors to combat human trafficking. LB326 introduced by Senator Matt Williams, is a comprehensive bill regarding Schedule I drugs that particularly addresses both K2 and edible products containing THC, both of which are particularly dangerous to Nebraskan youth. “Our priority legislation is focused on protecting Nebraska’s quality of life, specifically that of our youth,” said Peterson.

LB294 Human Trafficking

Labor and sex trafficking are modern day forms of slavery in which the victim’s basic human dignity is commoditized through various forms of coercion and violence. Unlike trafficking of drugs or weapons, the business model of human trafficking profits perpetrators through repeated use of their supply of victims. According to the American Center for Law and Justice and Shared Hope International, Nebraska currently has the second weakest statutes amongst its boarding states, save South Dakota. LB294 builds upon LB255 enacted last session and proactively strengthens Nebraska’s human trafficking laws and ensures that Nebraska does not become a safe haven for such criminal activity. LB294 attacks each aspect of the basic business model of human trafficking:

- Increased penalties for pandering deter recruitment of “supply”.
- Increased penalties on the consumers of sex trafficking, “johns”, diminishes demand.
- Improved subpoena power and forfeiture provisions decrease profits.
- All of which increase risk for pimps and trafficking rings operating in or through Nebraska.

Moreover, LB294 ensures that trafficking victims under 18 receive court-supervised support while remaining immune from prosecution and provides for a civil cause of action by victims against their traffickers. LB294 is a piece of the puzzle for eradicating human trafficking that

requires ongoing training of and collaboration with various law enforcement and prosecutorial entities along with community and non profit support services. Eradicating human trafficking in Nebraska is an ongoing initiative of Attorney General Peterson. “The world of human trafficking is a disgusting crime that completely devalues the dignity of persons. We in Nebraska need to send a strong message to traffickers that they will pay a heavy penalty if caught in our state,” stated Peterson.

LB326 Controlled Substances Act

Nebraska law enforcement and county prosecutors are facing new challenges with an influx of more potent and varied forms of marijuana, K2, and ingestible compounds containing THC. LB326 provides solutions to these challenges as requested by Nebraska law enforcement and county prosecutors and demonstrates an understanding of the serious harm posed by these substances classified as Schedule 1 drugs by the DEA. Under current law, possession of K2 (so-called synthetic marijuana) or compounds or mixtures containing hashish or concentrated marijuana are often treated as an infraction equivalent to possessing less than an ounce of marijuana. LB326 eliminates contradictory provisions in current Nebraska law by treating K2 and ingestible compounds containing marijuana or any amount of THC as Class IV felonies equivalent to possession of other controlled substances. Manufacture or distribution of ingestible forms of THC such as through brownies, butter, or candy results in a Class III felony. The burgeoning multi-billion dollar market for marijuana and other THC-laced products poses a real threat particularly to Nebraska youth. Even casual cannabis use has been linked to significant cognitive abnormalities in young adults aged 18-25 in a recent NIH-funded study conducted by Harvard Medical School and Northwestern Medical School. In addition, LB 326 makes several necessary additions to the controlled substances list to harmonize state and federal law including tramadol and several anabolic steroids.

Appearing with Attorney General Peterson in support of LB294:

Former state Senator Amanda McGill,
Former Omaha FBI Director Weysan Dun
Nebraska State Patrol Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Schwartzen,
Lincoln Police Chief Jim Peschong,
Al Riskowski executive director of the Nebraska Family Alliance
Ivy Svoboda of the Nebraska Child Advocacy Alliance
County Attorney Shawn Etherton representing Nebraska County Attorneys Association

Supporting LB326 :

Senator Matt Williams
County Attorney Shawn Etherton
Weysan Dun
Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Schwarten
Chief Jim Peschong