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**Capitol View  
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**Filibusters, Lobbyists, Vacancies and Loose Ends**

When all is said and done, usually more is said than done.

The 107th Nebraska Legislature might just about be done for the year, pending a decision on a special session – it would be their second for the year – to deal with possible fallout from the anticipated United States Supreme Court opinion on Roe v. Wade.

This group of 49 dealt with a pandemic, a time away from work during the height of the Covid-19 crisis,

a return to Plexiglas partitions, masks and social distancing. In the end it took a special session to

draw new district maps to reflect an increase in constituent population from some 37,000 to 40,030.

They spent more than a billion dollars in federal Covid relief funds and handed the term-limited

governor several big projects he wanted.

They talked a lot but didn’t set a record for filibusters. Lobbyists set a record for earnings from the

people who wanted to promote their favorite ideas and pet projects. The term-limited vacancy rate,

combined with one death, two retirements and possible election to a higher office came to 15 but

that’s not a record either.

The watchdog Common Cause Nebraska said lobbyists earned a record amount, $20,789,181, for

2021 which is roughly $2 million higher than the previous year. The 2022 figures will be released next

year. Lobbyists influence lawmakers daily with campaign contributions, gifts, entertainment and meals.

Since Nebraska doesn’t limit their contributions, lobbyists supply political campaigns with thousands of dollars. The nonprofit says ordinary citizens usually only contribute $20 to $100 by comparison.

Nebraska lawmakers launched into the first full-blown filibuster of the 2022 session during the second day of debate. By the time they headed home from the 60-day session, filibusters had filled up more than half of the 60 days they were in session and senators had taken votes on 24 filibuster-ending cloture motions on 15 bills and one resolution.

That number of cloture motions isn’t quite a record, but it’s close, according to a tally kept by the Clerk of the Legislature’s Office. There were 25 such motions in 2018 and 24 in 2016, the two previous high years. But it is considered a large number given the absence of former Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha, the undisputed master of the technique.

There are 14 vacancies, one caused by death, two by retirement and 11 by term limits. One more will happen if Speaker of the Legislature Mike Hilgers gets elected as the next Nebraska Attorney General.

Senator Rich Pahls of Omaha missed the waning days of the session before succumbing to cancer. He was in his second go-round after serving eight years and sitting out the term-limited mandatory four years.

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His Omaha colleague, Steve Lathrop, similarly served eight years, took four off, and came back for four more before deciding to retire from the Legislature. Senator Timothy Gragert of Creighton called it quits after one four-year term.

But wait, there’s more. If Senator Carol Blood of Bellevue, a Democrat, were to be elected Governor, that would be 16 vacancies and Hell would freeze over.

So, pending that special session, let’s call it a wrap on the 107th Legislature. Talk and all.

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*J.L. Schmidt has been covering Nebraska government and politics since 1979. He has been a registered Independent for more than 20 years.*