Nebraska State Education Association

A Century of Collective Bargaining

Strengthening Education in Nebraska | 1906-2026

For more than a century, NSEA has worked to strengthen the rights, protections and professional voice of Nebraska educators. Here are some of the key milestones that have shaped collective bargaining and the education profession in Nebraska.

THE RIGHT TO ORGANIZE & BARGAIN

1920	Constitutional authority for a tribunal to resolve labor disputes.
1947	Court of Industrial Relations (CIR) established.
1967	LB485 establishes the Nebraska Teachers' Professional Negotiations Act.
1969	LB15 extends collective bargaining rights to public employees, including educators.
1974/ 1979	Industrial Relations system evolves and operations are strengthened.
2011	LB397 modernizes the Industrial Relations Act and dispute resolution processes.

Result: Educators have a voice at work and a fair process for resolving disputes.

EDUCATOR PAY & RETIREMENT

1909/ 1945	Retirement systems established (OSERS; NPERS).
1972	Voters pass Amendment 13 for cost-of-living increases for retirees.
1989	LB89 increases minimum teacher salaries to $18,000.
2004	LB1097 guarantees teacher representation on Public Employees Retirement Board (PERB).
2013	LB553 increases state NPERS and OSERS contribution to 2%.
2025	LB645 establishes contribution tiers for NPERS employees.

Result: Competitive pay and retirement security for today and tomorrow.

PROTECTIONS AT WORK

1967	LB564 ensures 30-minute uninterrupted lunch for teachers.
1971	LB266 provides the right to a hearing in cases of contract termination.
1980	LB844 protects teachers during district mergers and consolidations.
1982	LB259 requires automatic renewal of bargaining agreements and contracts.

Result: Strong protections and stable contracts so educators can focus on students.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

2009	LB547 expands loan forgiveness for educators pursuing a Master's degree or becoming educators.
2022	LB1218 (Teach in Nebraska Today Act) provides loan forgiveness for new and veteran teachers.
2023	Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act provides grants up to $2,500, with an additional $5,000 in high-need areas.
2026	LB824 reduces break-in-service period for newly-retired educators from 180 days to 60 days.

Result: Attracting and retaining outstanding educators in every Nebraska classroom.

Want to know more? Explore the full history on the back. Have questions? Call NSEA at (800) 742-0047.

1909: The Neb. Legislature establishes the Omaha School Employees' Retirement System (OSERS).

Sept. 21, 1920: Delegates at the 1919-1920 Neb. Constitutional Convention adopted what later became Article XV, Section 9 of the Neb. State Constitution, granting the Legislature the authority to create a tribunal to resolve labor disputes. The proposed constitutional amendment was approved by Neb. voters in 1920.

1945: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB120, implementing the Neb. School Employees Retirement System, which applied to all educators statewide (except Omaha, which continues to use OSERS).

May 31, 1947: The Legislature passes LB537, establishing the Court of Industrial Relations as authorized by Article XV, section 9 of the State Constitution, which was tasked with adjudicating labor disputes. At the time, the Court could only recognize labor disputes stemming from "governmental service in a proprietary capacity" and disputes involving public utilities. Because of this, educators were not covered under LB537.

June 6, 1967: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB564, requiring school districts to provide teachers with a lunch period of at least 30 uninterrupted minutes.

July 19, 1967: After months of debate and delay, the Neb. Legislature passes LB485, an NSEA-backed bill to adopt the Neb. Teachers' Professional Negotiations Act (NTPNA). This bill, for the first time in state history, provided educators & NSEA with the statutory authority to organize & negotiate with Neb. school districts on wages, benefits, & conditions. However, the bill was considered "permissive," granting school districts ultimate authority on whether to grant recognition to bargaining units and choose which areas were open for formal negotiation. Under the NTPNA, disputes could not be resolved by the Court of Industrial Relations until all provisions of the Act were exhausted without resolution of the dispute.

April 29, 1969: The Neb. Legislature, in response to pressure from public employees and labor organizations, adopts LB15, extending collective bargaining rights to public employees. LB15 also classified teachers & educational staff as public employees under the act. The basic framework of LB15, though since amended, continues to influence collective bargaining today.

May 25, 1971: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB266, which provided educators with the right to a hearing in cases of contract termination.

Nov. 7, 1972: Neb. voters pass the NSEA-supported Amendment 13 during the General Election. This constitutional amendment permits cost-of-living increases for retired educators.

1972-1973: Various technical changes to bargaining statutes were adopted by the Neb. Legislature. This included LB1402 (1972), regarding negotiated agreements for police & firemen. Also adopted was LB1228 (1972), which gave the Court of Industrial Relations the authority to make rules and regulations regarding elections by employees to designate an exclusive collective bargaining agent.

April 13, 1974: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB819, which required the Court of Industrial Relations to elect a presiding judge every two years. LB819 also gave the Clerk of the Court the authority to direct bargaining agent representation elections. Finally, the bill required the Court to respond to all petitions within twenty days, hold hearings within sixty days of the filing of a petition, and enter an order within thirty days of a hearing. This bill was intended to expedite and streamline the Court's operations.

May 21, 1979: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB444, changing the Neb. Court of Industrial Relations to the Neb. Commission of Industrial Relations.

1980: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB844. With several school districts reorganizing, LB844 prevented school districts from discharging educators on a reduction in force basis when it closed because of a merger or consolidation. The "surviving" or newly created school district became the employer of all teachers from the closed or merged school districts. After a merger or reorganization, the collective bargaining agreement of the school district with the largest number of teachers would govern all of the teachers newly absorbed into the district, voiding their previous agreement but still providing negotiated protections. If only one of the school districts involved in a reorganization has a collective bargaining agreement, that agreement will bind the school district and all of the teachers now employed there.

March 24, 1982: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB259, requiring that collective bargaining agreements and employment contracts be automatically renewed for the next school year unless formally terminated or amended by the school board.

1986-1987: Various technical changes to bargaining statutes were adopted by the Legislature. This included LB258 (1986), which changed collective bargaining agreements made directly with the State of Neb. from annual to biennial to match the state's biennial appropriation scheme. Also adopted was LB524 (1987), which cleaned up language regarding the jurisdiction of the Commission of Industrial Relations as it related to the Neb. Teachers' Professional Negotiations Act.

April 8, 1987: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB661, the State Employees Collective Bargaining Act, codifying collective bargaining rights for employees of Neb. State Colleges. The NU Board of Regents, rather than NU System personnel offices, were made responsible for negotiating with certified bargaining agents representing university employees. For state colleges, the Board of Trustees or Directors was made responsible for negotiating with state college employees.

May 26, 1989: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB89, the Help Education Lead to Prosperity Act, which provided school districts with additional funding to be used for the express purpose of increasing teacher salaries contingent upon the collective bargaining agreement. The bill helped raise the minimum teacher salary to $18,000.

April 15, 2004: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB1097, guaranteeing teacher representation on the Public Employees Retirement Board.

April 22, 2009: The NSEA collaborates with the Neb. Legislature to pass LB547, establishing the Enhancing Excellence in Teaching Program and expanding loan forgiveness for educators working to earn a Master's Degree and for college students seeking to become educators.

May 26, 2011: The Neb. Legislature adopts LB397, completely revamping and modernizing the aged definitions & dispute language contained in the Industrial Relations Act, which was first codified in 1947. LB397 also required three commissioners on the Commission of Industrial relations to preside over and decide all industrial disputes related to the comparability of wages, benefits, and terms of employment. The bill changed bargaining dates for negotiations involving school districts to better match district budgeting timelines and gave the Commission additional authority to change wage rates for school district employees as needed based on predetermined ranges.

May 14, 2013: The Neb. Legislature overrides a veto from Gov. Dave Heineman to adopt LB553, requiring that the state increase its NPERS and OSERS contribution from 0.7% to 2%.

April 19, 2022: The NSEA and the Neb. Legislature adopt LB1218, the Teach in Neb. Today Act. This act provides student teachers with loan forgiveness of up to $1,000, and up to $5,000 per year for up to five years for certificated teachers.

June 1, 2023: The NSEA-introduced Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act is adopted by the Neb. Legislature. This Act provides educators with grants of up to $2,500 for educators in their second, fourth, and sixth year of teaching. A high-needs grant of $5,000 may also be provided to educators who obtain an endorsement in special education, math, science, or technology.

May 6, 2025: The NSEA works with the Neb. Legislature to pass LB645, a bill that establishes employee contribution tiers for NPERS based on the financial status of the plan. If the NPERS plan if funded above certain percentages, teacher contributions decrease, leading to hikes in pay.

April 7, 2026: The NSEA works with the Neb. Legislature to adopt LB824, which decreases the required break-in-service period for newly-retired educators from 180-days to 120-days. With this change in place, retired educators with a desire to substitute teach can begin sooner, helping to ease the teacher shortage.