



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

Legislative Update:

LB 274 Combines Several Bills That Weaken Liquor Laws

Proposed changes will hurt public health and safety



Yesterday, the Legislature advanced [LB 274](#) to the final stage of debate on a voice vote despite an overwhelming amount of research demonstrating that increasing the availability of alcohol leads to excessive drinking and harms such as impaired driving, alcohol-related crimes and significant economic costs to taxpayers.

The bill is a knee-jerk reaction to the pandemic even though a vast majority of alcohol license holders continue to benefit from executive orders put in place in March 2020 with no end in sight, and it reads like an alcohol executive's Christmas wish list.

This bill has three main provisions that are problematic for public health and safety:

1. **The permanent extension of cocktails-to-go.** An attempt by Sen. John Cavanaugh to require licenses to apply (starting in July 2022) for a specific license to continue this service was met with strong opposition. The compromise reached will require these businesses to indicate their intent to continue offering cocktails-to-go on their application or renewal form, but it won't require a city council or county commission hearing to allow citizens to share their concerns about the impact on their neighborhoods.
2. **The permanent extension of alcohol sales to persons in a vehicle.** There was little debate over the wisdom of allowing alcohol sales to persons in their vehicles. There is a requirement that food sales

accompany these alcohol sales; however, Sen. Wishart confirmed that sales of chips would qualify as food, significantly reducing the effectiveness of that safeguard. Approximately 45% of Class D licenses, one of the types of licenses that are allowed to continue this practice, are gas stations and liquor stores. The defense most frequently offered as a reason for permanently extending this provision was: "The sky hasn't fallen in," apparently an effective 'mic drop' policy argument in Nebraska these days.

- 3. A lower excise tax rate for ready-to-drink (RTD) cocktails made from spirits.** Spirits that contain less than 12.5% alcohol by volume are estimated by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to account for 20% of all spirits sales in our state. LB 274 would cut the tax rate on those products by 75% -- a move that would lead to millions of dollars in lost revenue and an increase in excessive drinking. Yet state senators were more than willing to take the multi-million dollar loss on Sen. Tony Vargas' belief that the state would soon be making more money that it'll be losing in the coming years. For perspective, the General Affairs Committee indefinitely postponed a bill in 2015 that would have prevented the LCC from charging fees associated with hearings. The issue gained attention when two women in Lincoln were sent a bill for protesting a liquor license at a movie theater after the LCC issued a license over their objections. That bill would have cost the state approximately \$15,000 per year versus the millions that the state will lose as a result of lowering the tax on RTD cocktails.

Scientific research resoundingly recommends making alcohol less accessible and more expensive to discourage excessive drinking and its harms, of which our state has many. Nebraska is ranked as the 5th-worst binge drinking state, the 2nd-worst self-reported DUI state, and taxpayers already pay an estimated \$491 million per year in economic costs due to excessive drinking.

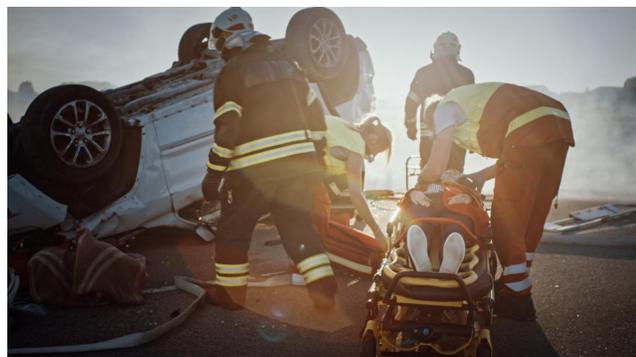
Public health and safety advocacy around LB 274 was merely about trying to hold the line. Until policymakers take these issues more seriously, Nebraskans will continue to suffer the tragic consequences resulting from LB 274 and bills like it.

To review a listing of the bills that Project Extra Mile is tracking this legislative session, [click here](#).

Early Data Show Increase in Traffic and Pedestrian Fatalities

Preventable deaths up 8% as mileage drops 13% in 2020

In March, the National Safety Council (NSC) released its preliminary semiannual [estimates related to motor vehicle deaths for 2020](#). Despite a sharp drop in miles driven in 2020, traffic fatalities were up significantly. According to NSC, 42,060 lives were lost last year, 115 deaths each day due to preventable traffic crashes. This represents an increase of 8% from 39,107 in 2019. The estimated mileage death rate is 1.49 deaths per 100 million vehicle



miles traveled (VMT), up 24% from 1.20 in 2019. Estimated VMT for 2020 indicate a 13% decrease compared to 2019, from 3,260 billion to 2,830 billion. In Nebraska, nearly 1 in 4 fatal crashes involved alcohol in 2019.

“We are losing ground as a nation when it comes to roadway safety,” said Lorraine Martin, President/CEO of the National Safety Council, during a national briefing in March on achieving zero traffic deaths.

Preliminary data reported by Governors Highway Safety Association in March projects the [U.S. pedestrian fatality rate](#) per billion VMT jumped to 2.2 deaths for the first six months of 2020 compared to 1.8 during the same period in 2019 – a 20% increase. For the driver and/or pedestrian, alcohol impairment was reported in about half of traffic crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities in 2019.

An article published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* noted that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to “a pressing need for the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) National Vital Statistics System (NVSS) to rapidly release reliable provisional mortality data.” Provisional estimates from NCHS indicate a [17.7% increase in the number of deaths in 2020](#)(the increase in the age-adjusted rate was 15.9%) compared with 2019, with increases in many leading causes of death. Deaths for unintentional injury had increased by 11.1%.

NCHS reports official mortality estimates for the United States, and final mortality estimates are generally published after a year. The most recent NCHS official estimate shows 39,107 deaths occurring in 2019, while the NSC estimates 38,800 -- a difference of 307 deaths.

Youth Involvement Key to Underage Drinking Prevention

Virtual leadership workshop planned for June



Project Extra Mile is hosting a free Youth Leadership Workshop for students entering grades 8 – 12 on **Tuesday, June 15th, 2021, from 9:00 a.m. until 12:30 p.m.**

Young people have a strong voice in protecting their communities' health and safety and are encouraged to take the lead in preventing underage alcohol use.

Through Project Extra Mile's youth leadership efforts, students collaborate with adults to reach their goals. Students who

participate in the June event will:

- Learn about the harmful effects of alcohol on the health and safety of their peers;
- Develop a plan to make changes in their school and community; and
- Connect with other students who are working to make Nebraska a safer place to live.

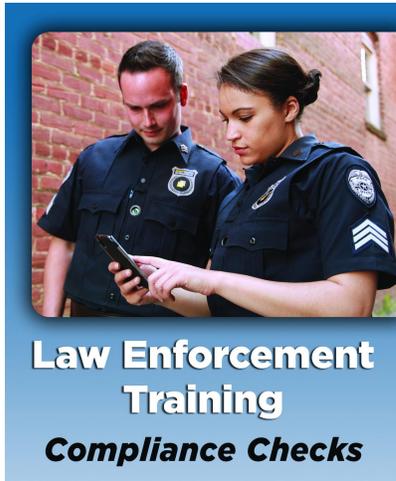
Nigel Wrangham will facilitate the training and has worked with groups of young people across the country to build leadership skills and advocate for social change. Nigel has developed and delivered customized prevention trainings to staff, volunteers, and youth from community-based organizations,

including Project Extra Mile, since 1999.

[Registration is available online.](#) The deadline for submitting the online application is **Friday, June 4th**. Please share this event with students in communities across the state, encouraging young people not to miss this unique opportunity to make a difference.

Virtual Training for Law Enforcement Agencies and Coalitions

Register by April 16th



In partnership with the Nebraska Department of Transportation - Highway Safety Office and Region 6 Behavioral Healthcare, Project Extra Mile is hosting a free, virtual Law Enforcement Training on Wednesday, April 21st. The training will focus on preventing and reducing alcohol-related harms through targeted enforcement efforts, specifically alcohol compliance checks. Law enforcement representatives, prosecutors, and community coalition members in Nebraska are encouraged to attend this first-time virtual training opportunity.

"Communities across the state have made considerable progress in reducing youth access to alcohol due to consistent alcohol compliance checks," said Project Extra Mile Executive Director Chris Wagner. "It's imperative to continue these efforts, so we don't lose more ground following an increase in alcohol sales and alcohol-related harms during the pandemic."

Trainers include retired special agent Nancy McGee (Missouri Department of Public Safety - Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control), Milissa Johnson-Wiles (Nebraska Attorney General's Office), Matt Kuhse (Omaha City Prosecutor's Office), and both Clint Zost and James Estwick (Nebraska State Patrol). The training will cover the need for alcohol compliance checks and research behind the effectiveness of reducing youth access to alcohol; planning, implementing, and evaluating operations; overcoming challenges while conducting operations; and building partnerships and community support for underage drinking prevention efforts.

For more details and to [register for the training](#), visit Project Extra Mile's website. The **registration deadline is Friday, April 16th, 2021**.

Did You Know?

The National Safety Council (NSC) has partnered with NORC at the University of Chicago to update its resource "The Real Cost of Substance Use to Employers," a calculator to provide business leaders with specific information about the cost of substance use (including alcohol misuse as well as illicit

drugs) in their workplaces. The results provided are based on the size of an employee base, industry, and state. To learn more and access the easy-to-use tool, visit the NSC's [website](#).

“More than [70% of individuals with substance use disorders \(SUDs\) are in the workforce](#), making this a crucial workplace safety issue. To help raise

awareness, the National Safety Council has collaborated on developing a substance use calculator for employers. I would encourage companies to use the calculator to understand the financial impact of substance use on their businesses,” said Eric Koeppel, President/CEO of the National Safety Council, Nebraska.



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicates that most of the costs of excessive alcohol use result from losses in workplace productivity (72% of the total cost). The exact cost burden on employers is estimated to range from [\\$33 billion to \\$68 billion each year](#) and is based on a number of factors including absences, lost productivity, and healthcare costs for associated medical issues, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month

Join us to discuss data on alcohol-related harms in Nebraska



Omaha Metro Coalition Meeting

Wednesday, **April 14, 2021**
9:00 a.m.

Please join us **VIRTUALLY** as we welcome

[Himani Byregowda, MPH,](#)
[Behavioral Health Epidemiologist](#)
with the Nebraska Department of
Health and Human Services, who will share
the Latest Data on Alcohol Misuse
and Related Harms in Nebraska.

Thank you for your involvement!

Jennifer Pollock
Jennifer Pollock, Coalition Chair

Join Zoom Meeting:

Meeting ID: 972 2173 0058

Password: 12345

For more information:
(402) 963-9047



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Project Extra Mile's next coalition meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, April 14th, at 9 a.m.** Please join us as we welcome Himani Byregowda, a behavioral health epidemiologist with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, to learn more about the prevalence of substance misuse in Nebraska and the associated harms.

Himani is a member of the Statewide Epidemiological Outcomes Work Group, or SEOW, which reports and evaluates data related to substance misuse prevention and treatment in Nebraska. As the workgroup prepares to release the biennial Epidemiological Profile, Himani will share the latest data and harms related to Nebraska's alcohol misuse. The report will serve as a resource for prevention planning and prioritizing programs, practices, and policies in the state.

The Project Extra Mile coalition will continue to meet each month via [Zoom](#).
For more information on opportunities to be involved and to receive future meeting invitations, please contact info@projectextramile.org.

