

October 8, 2009

Dear friends:

I wanted to take a moment to look back on what I believe was a very productive and successful 2009 Legislative session on behalf of all Nebraskans, and look ahead to the work we are doing on the tough issues our state continues to face. In 2009, the Legislature successfully addressed issues relating to the budget, property tax relief, immigration reform (LB403), gangs and violent crime (LB63), Safe Haven (LB603), the death penalty (LB36), and protecting our youth from sex offenders (LB97).

As Chairman of the Judiciary Committee and as your representative I will continue to work on tough issues while pursuing the goals of keeping our communities safe and reducing expenditures. The governor has called for a Special Session beginning on November 4 to address the budget. Of course, the first priority of the special session is to make whatever adjustments are necessary to balance the budget with no tax increases. My priorities for next year are focused on reducing crime and finding savings by looking for alternatives to incarceration for non-violent and early offenders. These priorities include:

1. Reducing violent crime with collaborative strategies developed through the Office of Violence Prevention;
2. Reducing prison overcrowding by diverting non-violent offenders into community corrections and reentry programming;
3. Juvenile justice reform that focuses on alternatives to detention for non-violent offenders and ways to address habitual truancy; and
4. Ensuring that state aid to the community colleges mirrors the actual cost of serving students and that there is a clear process of accountability to make certain that all the colleges are playing by the rules.

As your State Senator, I believe you expect me to lead and encourage collaboration on important issues. Although the financial situation is becoming very difficult and will dictate much of what we can do in this short session, I will openly and candidly work on your behalf to make a difference. It is critical for you to let me know about the issues that are important to you. I welcome you to contact my office by phone at (402) 471-2622, by mail at State Capitol Room 1103, PO Box 94604, Lincoln, NE 68509-4604 or by email at bashford@leg.ne.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Schaff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

State Senator Brad Ashford