



Marriage License Fees

Overview

Purpose

Marriage licenses in the State of Nebraska are issued and recorded by county clerks. To begin the licensing process, a couple fills out an application and files it in the Office of the County Clerk. The clerk records the information and issues the license. The couple has 15 days to return the license for certification, which requires documentation that includes the date of marriage, officiant titles, and witness signatures.

The current fee charged for a Marriage License is \$25. A fee of \$9 is charged for certified copies. Both of these fees are deposited into the general fund of the county. The fee is collected to cover the costs of these administrative procedures, including issuing and recording the license.

Legislative Background

The Marriage License Fee was updated in 1995 from \$10 to \$15. A 2014 Interim Study Report on LR582 suggested updating the fee again, finding the service costs to counties to be more than the billable rate.

In 2015, Senator Kathy Campbell introduced LB88, which aimed to recognize expenses incurred by counties by increasing the fees to \$50 for marriage licenses, and align state and counties fees to \$16 for certified copies. Lancaster County estimated that the actual costs to issue a marriage license were \$55, which reflected the costs of employee wages as well as proportionate costs including rent, postage, and office supplies. Approximately one-third of the marriage licenses returned to the Lancaster County Clerk's Office required follow-up by staff members to obtain missing information.

Ultimately, LB88 was amended and enacted to increase the marriage license fees of \$25 for marriage licenses and \$9 for certified copies.

Stakeholders

- County residents
- County officials

Financial Analysis

Marriage License Fees

Nebraska Revenue Projections

64 counties reported marriage license fee revenues, so we created a two-year average for the number of marriage licenses using county budget data (FY2022 & 2023). For the remaining 29 counties, we gathered data from the Nebraska DHHS vital statistics (2012-2016) and created a five-year average for the number of marriage licenses for these counties.

County Size	Number of Licenses	Total Current Revenue	Total Projected Revenue
		\$25 fee	\$50 fee
Small (< 5,000)	434	\$10,850	\$21,700
Medium (5,000-50,000)	4,037	\$100,925	\$201,850
Large (> 50,000)	7,214	\$180,350	\$360,700
Total	11,685	\$292,125	\$584,250

Surrounding State Comparison

Marriage Licenses

State	Total Marriage License Fee	Fee Revenue Retained by County
Colorado	\$30	\$7
Iowa	\$35	\$35
Kansas	\$85	Not Applicable
Missouri	\$63 (maximum) \$50 Avg in Counties	Varies by County
South Dakota	\$40	\$10
Wyoming	\$30	\$30

Certified Copies

State	County Total Certified Copy Fee	Fee Revenue Retained by County
Colorado	\$1.25	\$1.25
Iowa	\$4	\$4
Kansas	Not Applicable	Not Applicable
Missouri	\$24 (maximum) \$9 Avg in Counties	Varies by County
South Dakota	\$15	\$15
Wyoming	\$5	\$5

Recommendations

Marriage License Fees

LB896

Comparable to 2015, the Lancaster County Clerk's office estimates the 2024 actual cost to be \$55 per marriage license. This valuation includes rates for labor as well as necessary supplies, and reflects an increase in associated costs related to inflation. Given the difference between the current approximation of \$55/license, and the rate of \$25/license permitted by statute, there is a clear need for an increase in marriage license fees to help offset the economic impact to counties for performing this service.

LB896 proposes increasing fees for marriage licenses from \$25 to \$50 to cover the costs of issuance by county clerks. Costs for certified copies issued by counties would be increased from \$9 to \$16 to mirror the cost of certified copies issued by the state's Office of Vital Records within the Department of Health and Human Services.

Nebraska Statutes

- Neb. Rev. Stat. §42-104
- Neb. Rev. Stat. §42-106
- Neb. Rev. Stat. §42-108
- Neb. Rev. Stat. §42-112
- Neb. Rev. Stat. §33-110

Additional References

Judiciary Committee, LB 88 Hearing Transcript, 2015

<https://www.nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/104/PDF/Transcripts/Judiciary/2015-01-21.pdf>

Government, Military, and Veteran's Affairs Committee, LR 582 Interim Study Report, 2014:

https://nebraskalegislature.gov/pdf/reports/committee/government/lr582report_2014.pdf

Fiscal Note for LB 88:

https://nebraskalegislature.gov/FloorDocs/104/PDF/FN/LB88_20150120-140741.pdf