

LEGISLATIVE BILL 479

Approved by the Governor April 15, 2004

Introduced by Baker, 44

AN ACT relating to ethanol; to amend sections 66-482, 66-1330, 66-1333, 66-1344, 66-1344.01, 66-1345, 66-1345.01, 77-4104.01, and 77-5536, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; to change and eliminate provisions relating to ethanol tax credits and the funds used for such credits; to define and redefine terms; to harmonize provisions; to repeal the original sections; to outright repeal section 66-1346, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 66-482, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-482. For purposes of sections 66-482 to 66-4,149:

(1) Motor vehicle shall have the same definition as in section 60-301;

(2) Motor vehicle fuel shall include all products and fuel commonly or commercially known as gasoline, including casing head or natural gasoline, and shall include any other liquid and such other volatile and inflammable liquids as may be produced, compounded, or used for the purpose of operating or propelling motor vehicles, motorboats, or aircraft or as an ingredient in the manufacture of such fuel. Agricultural ethyl alcohol produced for use as a motor vehicle fuel shall be considered a motor vehicle fuel. Motor vehicle fuel shall not include the products commonly known as methanol, kerosene oil, kerosene distillate, crude petroleum, naphtha, and benzine with a boiling point over two hundred degrees Fahrenheit, residuum gas oil, smudge oil, leaded automotive racing fuel with an American Society of Testing Materials research method octane number in excess of one hundred five, and any petroleum product with an initial boiling point under two hundred degrees Fahrenheit, a ninety-five percent distillation (recovery) temperature in excess of four hundred sixty-four degrees Fahrenheit, an American Society of Testing Materials research method octane number less than seventy, and an end or dry point of distillation of five hundred seventy degrees Fahrenheit maximum;

(3) Agricultural ethyl alcohol shall mean ethyl alcohol produced from cereal grains or agricultural commodities grown within the continental United States, ~~and for~~ which is a finished product that is a nominally anhydrous ethyl alcohol meeting American Society for Testing and Materials D4806 standards. For the purpose of sections 66-482 to 66-4,149, the purity of the ethyl alcohol shall be determined excluding denaturant and the volume of alcohol blended with gasoline for motor vehicle fuel shall include the volume of any denaturant required pursuant to law;

(4) Alcohol blend shall mean a blend of agricultural ethyl alcohol in gasoline or other motor vehicle fuel, such blend to contain not less than five percent by volume of alcohol;

(5) Supplier shall mean any person who owns motor vehicle fuel imported by barge, barge line, or pipeline and stored at a barge, barge line, or pipeline terminal in this state and any person who refines and stores motor vehicle fuel at a refinery in this state;

(6) Distributor shall mean any person who acquires ownership of motor vehicle fuel directly from a supplier at or from a barge, barge line, or pipeline terminal in this state;

(7) Wholesaler shall mean any person, other than a supplier, distributor, or importer, who acquires motor vehicle fuel for resale;

(8) Retailer shall mean any person who acquires motor vehicle fuel from a supplier, distributor, wholesaler, or importer for resale to consumers of such fuel;

(9) Importer shall mean any person who owns motor vehicle fuel at the time such fuel enters the State of Nebraska by any means other than barge, barge line, or pipeline. Importer shall not include a person who imports motor vehicle fuel in a tank directly connected to the engine of a motor vehicle, train, watercraft, or airplane for purposes of providing fuel to the engine to which the tank is connected;

(10) Exporter shall mean any person who acquires ownership of motor vehicle fuel from any licensed supplier, distributor, wholesaler, or importer exclusively for use or resale in another state;

(11) Gross gallons shall mean measured gallons without adjustment or correction for temperature or barometric pressure;

(12) Diesel fuel shall mean any fuel defined as diesel fuel in section 66-654;

(13) Compressed fuel shall mean any fuel defined as compressed fuel in section 66-6,100;

(14) Person shall mean any individual, firm, partnership, limited liability company, company, agency, association, corporation, state, county, municipality, or other political subdivision;

(15) Department shall mean the Motor Fuel Tax Enforcement and Collection Division of the Department of Revenue; and

(16) Semiannual period shall mean either the period which begins on January 1 and ends on June 30 of each year or the period which begins on July 1 and ends on December 31 of each year.

Sec. 2. Section 66-1330, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1330. Sections 66-1330 to 66-1348 and section 3 of this act shall be known and may be cited as the Ethanol Development Act.

Sec. 3. Any funds received by the Department of Revenue which result from an ethanol producer claiming excess credit, and any related interest and penalties thereon, shall be remitted to the State Treasurer for credit to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund.

Sec. 4. Section 66-1333, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1333. For purposes of the Ethanol Development Act, unless the context otherwise requires:

(1) Agricultural production facility or ethanol facility means a plant or facility related to the processing, marketing, or distribution of any products derived from grain components, coproducts, or byproducts;

(2) Board means the Nebraska Ethanol Board;

(3) Commercial channels means the sale of corn or grain sorghum for any use, to any commercial buyer, dealer, processor, cooperative, or person, public or private, who resells any corn or grain sorghum or product produced from corn or grain sorghum;

(4) Corn means corn as defined in section 2-3610;

(5) Delivered or delivery means receiving corn or grain sorghum for any use other than storage;

(6) First purchaser means any person, public or private corporation, association, partnership, or limited liability company buying, accepting for shipment, or otherwise acquiring corn or grain sorghum in Nebraska, and includes a mortgagee, pledgee, lienor, or other person, public or private, having a claim against the grower, when the actual or constructive possession of the corn or grain sorghum is taken as part payment or in satisfaction of such mortgage, pledge, lien, or claim;

(7) Grain means wheat, corn, and grain sorghum;

(8) Grower means any landowner personally engaged in growing corn or grain sorghum, a tenant of the landowner personally engaged in growing corn or grain sorghum, and both the owner and tenant jointly and includes a person, partnership, limited liability company, association, corporation, cooperative, trust, sharecropper, and other business unit, device, and arrangement;

(9) Name plate design capacity means the original designed capacity of an agricultural production facility. Capacity may be specified as bushels of grain ground or gallons of ethanol produced per year; and

(10) Related parties means any two or more individuals, firms, partnerships, limited liability companies, companies, agencies, associations, or corporations which are members of the same unitary group or are any persons who are considered to be related persons under the Internal Revenue Code; and

(11) Sale includes any pledge or mortgage of corn or grain sorghum after harvest to any person, public or private.

Sec. 5. Section 66-1344, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1344. ~~(1) Any ethanol facility which is not in production on or before December 31, 1992, but which is in production at the rate of at least twenty-five percent of its name plate design capacity for the production of ethanol, before denaturing, on or before December 31, 1995, shall receive a credit of twenty cents per gallon of ethanol produced for sixty months beginning with the first month for which it is eligible to receive such credit and ending not later than December 31, 2000, if the ethanol facility maintains an average production rate of at least twenty-five percent of its name plate design capacity for at least six months after the first month for which it is eligible to receive such credit.~~

(2) Any ethanol facility eligible for a credit under subsection (1) of this section shall also receive a credit of twenty cents per gallon of ethanol produced in excess of the original name plate design capacity which

results from expansion of the facility completed on or before December 31, 1995. Such credit shall be for sixty months beginning with the first month for which production from the expanded facility is eligible to receive such credit and ending not later than December 31, 2000.

~~(3)~~ (1) Beginning June 1, 2000, during such period as funds remain in the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund, any ethanol facility shall receive a credit of seven and one-half cents per gallon of ethanol, before denaturing, for new production for a period not to exceed thirty-six consecutive months. For purposes of this subsection, new production means production which results from the expansion of an existing facility's capacity by at least two million gallons first placed into service after June 1, 1999, as certified by the facility's design engineer to the Department of Revenue. For expansion of an existing facility's capacity, new production means production in excess of the average of the highest three months of ethanol production at an ethanol facility during the twenty-four-month period immediately preceding certification of the facility by the design engineer. No credits shall be allowed under this subsection for expansion of an existing facility's capacity until production is in excess of twelve times the three-month average amount determined under this subsection during any twelve-consecutive-month period beginning no sooner than June 1, 2000. New production shall be approved by the Department of Revenue based on such ethanol production records as may be necessary to reasonably determine new production. ~~Ethanol production eligible for credits under this subsection shall be measured by a device approved by the Division of Weights and Measures of the Department of Agriculture. Confirmation of approval by the division shall be provided by the ethanol facility at the time the initial claim for credits provided under this subsection is submitted to the Department of Revenue. This credit must be earned on or before December 31, 2003.~~

~~(4)(a)~~ (2)(a) Beginning January 1, 2002, any new ethanol facility which is in production at the minimum rate of one hundred thousand gallons annually for the production of ethanol, before denaturing, and which has provided to the Department of Revenue written evidence substantiating that the ethanol facility has received the requisite authority from the Department of Environmental Quality and from the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, on or before June 30, 2004, shall receive a credit of eighteen cents per gallon of ethanol produced for ninety-six consecutive months beginning with the first calendar month for which it is eligible to receive such credit and ending not later than June 30, 2012, if the facility is defined by subdivision (b)(i) of this subsection, and for forty-eight consecutive months beginning with the first calendar month for which it is eligible to receive such credit and ending not later than June 30, 2008, if the facility is defined by subdivision (b)(ii) of this subsection. The new ethanol facility shall provide an analysis to the Department of Revenue of samples of the product collected according to procedures specified by the department no later than July 30, 2004, and at least annually thereafter. The analysis shall be prepared by an independent laboratory meeting the International Organization for Standardization standard ISO/IEC 17025:1999. Prior to collecting the samples, the new ethanol facility shall notify the department which may observe the sampling procedures utilized by the new ethanol facility to obtain the samples to be submitted for independent analysis. The minimum rate shall be established for a period of at least thirty days. In this regard, the new ethanol facility must produce at least eight thousand two hundred nineteen gallons of ethanol within a thirty-day period. The ethanol must be finished product which is ready for sale to customers.

(b) For purposes of this ~~section~~, a subsection, new ethanol facility means ~~an ethanol~~ a facility for the conversion of grain or other raw feedstock into ethanol and other byproducts of ethanol production which (i) is not in production on or before September 1, 2001, or (ii) has not received credits prior to June 1, 1999. A new ethanol facility does not mean an expansion of an existing ethanol plant that does not result in the physical construction of an entire ethanol processing facility or which shares or uses in a significant manner any existing plant's systems or processes and does not include the expansion of production capacity constructed after June 30, 2004, of a plant qualifying for credits under this subsection. This definition applies to contracts entered into after the effective date of this act.

(c) Not more than fifteen million six hundred twenty-five thousand gallons of ethanol produced annually at an ethanol facility shall be eligible for credits under this subsection. Not more than one hundred twenty-five million gallons of ethanol produced at an ethanol facility by the end of the ninety-six-consecutive-month period or forty-eight-consecutive-month period set forth in this subsection shall be eligible for credits under this

subsection.

~~(5) (3) The credits described in this section shall be given only for ethanol produced at a plant in Nebraska at which all fermentation, distillation, and dehydration takes place. No credit shall be given on ethanol produced for or sold for use in the production of beverage alcohol. Not more than twenty-five million gallons of ethanol produced annually at an ethanol facility shall be eligible for the credits in subsections (1) and (2) of this section, and the credits may only be claimed by a producer for the periods specified in subsections (1) and (2) of this section. Not more than ten million gallons of ethanol produced during any twelve-consecutive-month period at an ethanol facility shall be eligible for the credit described in subsection (3) (1) of this section. Not more than one hundred twenty-five million gallons of ethanol produced at an ethanol facility by the end of the sixty-month period set forth in subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall be eligible for the credit under such subsection. An ethanol facility which receives a credit for ethanol produced under subsection (1) or (2) of this section shall not receive a credit under subsection (3) of this section until its eligibility to receive a credit under subsection (1) or (2) has been completed. The credits described in this section shall be in the form of a nonrefundable, transferable motor vehicle fuel tax credit certificate. No transfer of credits will be allowed between the ethanol producer and motor vehicle fuel licensees who are related parties.~~

(4) Ethanol production eligible for credits under this section shall be measured by a device approved by the Division of Weights and Measures of the Department of Agriculture. Confirmation of approval by the division shall be provided by the ethanol facility at the time the initial claim for credits provided under this section is submitted to the Department of Revenue and annually thereafter. Claims submitted by the ethanol producer shall be based on the total number of gallons of ethanol produced, before denaturing, during the reporting period measured in gross gallons.

~~(6) (5) The Department of Revenue shall prescribe an application form and procedures for claiming credits under this section. In order for a claim for credits to be accepted, it must be filed by the ethanol producer within three years of the date the ethanol was produced or by September 30, 2012, whichever occurs first.~~

(6) Every producer of ethanol shall maintain records similar to those required by section 66-487. The ethanol producer must maintain invoices, meter readings, load-out sheets or documents, inventory records, including work-in-progress, finished goods, and denaturant, and other memoranda requested by the Department of Revenue relevant to the production of ethanol. On an annual basis, the ethanol producer shall also be required to furnish the department with copies of the reports filed with the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. The maintenance of all of this information in a provable computer format or on microfilm is acceptable in lieu of retention of the original documents. The records must be retained for a period of not less than three years after the claim for ethanol credits is filed.

(7) For purposes of ascertaining the correctness of any application for claiming a credit provided in this section, the Tax Commissioner (a) may examine or cause to have examined, by any agent or representative designated by him or her for that purpose, any books, papers, records, or memoranda bearing upon such matters, (b) may by summons require the attendance of the person responsible for rendering the application or other document or any officer or employee of such person or the attendance of any other person having knowledge in the premises, and (c) may take testimony and require proof material for his or her information, with power to administer oaths or affirmations to such person or persons. The time and place of examination pursuant to this subsection shall be such time and place as may be fixed by the Tax Commissioner and as are reasonable under the circumstances. In the case of a summons, the date fixed for appearance before the Tax Commissioner shall not be less than twenty days from the time of service of the summons. No taxpayer shall be subjected to unreasonable or unnecessary examinations or investigations. All records obtained pursuant to this subsection shall be subject to the confidentiality requirements and exceptions thereto as provided in section 77-27,119.

(8) To qualify for credits under this section, an ethanol producer shall provide public notice for bids before entering into any contract for the construction of a new ethanol facility. Preference shall be given to a bidder residing in Nebraska when awarding any contract for construction of a new ethanol facility if comparable bids are submitted. For purposes of this subsection, bidder residing in Nebraska means any person, partnership, foreign or domestic limited liability company, association, or corporation authorized

to engage in business in the state with employees permanently located in Nebraska. If an ethanol producer enters into a contract for the construction of a new ethanol facility with a bidder who is not a bidder residing in Nebraska, such producer shall demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Department of Revenue in its application for credits that no comparable bid was submitted by a responsible bidder residing in Nebraska. The department shall deny an application for credits if it is determined that the contract was denied to a responsible bidder residing in Nebraska without cause.

(9) The pertinent provisions of Chapter 66, article 7, relating to the administration and imposition of motor fuel taxes shall apply to the administration and imposition of assessments made by the Department of Revenue relating to excess credits claimed by ethanol producers under the Ethanol Development Act. These provisions include, but are not limited to, issuance of a deficiency following an examination of records, an assessment becoming final after thirty days absent a written protest, presumptions regarding the burden of proof, issuance of deficiency within three years of original filing, issuance of notice by registered or certified mail, issuance of penalties and waiver thereof, issuance of interest and waiver thereof, and issuance of corporate officer or employee or limited liability company manager or member assessments. For purposes of determining interest and penalties, the due date will be considered to be the date on which the credits were used by the licensees to whom the credits were transferred.

(10) If a written protest is filed by the ethanol producer with the department within the thirty-day period in subsection (9) of this section, the protest shall: (a) Identify the ethanol producer; (b) identify the proposed assessment which is being protested; (c) set forth each ground under which a redetermination of the department's position is requested together with facts sufficient to acquaint the department with the exact basis thereof; (d) demand the relief to which the ethanol producer considers itself entitled; and (e) request that an evidentiary hearing be held to determine any issues raised by the protest if the ethanol producer desires such a hearing.

Sec. 6. Section 66-1344.01, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1344.01. The Tax Commissioner and the producer eligible to receive credits under subsection ~~(4)~~ (2) of section 66-1344 shall enter into a written agreement. The producer shall agree to produce ethanol at the designated facility and any expansion thereof. The Tax Commissioner, on behalf of the State of Nebraska, shall agree to furnish the producer the tax credits as provided by and limited in section 66-1344 in effect on the date of the agreement. The agreement to produce ethanol in return for the credits shall be sufficient consideration, and the agreement shall be binding upon the state. No credit shall be given to any producer of ethanol which fails to produce ethanol in Nebraska in compliance with the agreement. The agreement shall include:

- (1) The name of the producer;
- (2) The address of the ethanol facility;
- (3) The date of the initial eligibility of the ethanol facility to receive such credits;
- (4) The name plate design capacity of the ethanol facility as of the date of its initial eligibility to receive such credits; and
- (5) The name plate design capacity which the facility is intended to have after the completion of any proposed expansion. If no expansion is contemplated at the time of the initial agreement, the agreement may be amended to include any proposed expansion.

The Tax Commissioner shall not accept any applications for new agreements on or after the effective date of this act.

Sec. 7. Section 66-1345, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1345. (1) There is hereby created the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund which shall be used by the board to pay the credits created in section 66-1344 to the extent provided in this section. Any money in the fund available for investment shall be invested by the state investment officer pursuant to the Nebraska Capital Expansion Act and the Nebraska State Funds Investment Act. The State Treasurer shall transfer to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund such money as shall be (a) appropriated to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund by the Legislature, (b) given as gifts, bequests, grants, or other contributions to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund from public or private sources, (c) made available due to failure to fulfill conditional requirements pursuant to investment agreements entered into prior to April 30, 1992, (d) received as return on investment of the Ethanol Authority and Development Cash Fund, (e) credited to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund from the excise taxes imposed by section

66-1345.01, and (f) credited to the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund pursuant to section 66-1345.04.

(2) The Department of Revenue shall, at the end of each calendar month, notify the State Treasurer of the amount of motor fuel tax that was not collected in the preceding calendar month due to the credits provided in section 66-1344. The State Treasurer shall transfer from the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund to the Highway Trust Fund an amount equal to such credits less the following amounts:

(a) For 1993, 1994, and 1995, the amount generated during the calendar quarter by a one-cent tax on motor fuel pursuant to sections 66-489, 66-668, and 66-6,107;

(b) For 1996, the amount generated during the calendar quarter by a three-quarters-cent tax on motor fuel pursuant to such sections;

(c) For 1997, the amount generated during the calendar quarter by a one-half-cent tax on motor fuel pursuant to such sections; and

(d) For 1998 and each year thereafter, no reduction.

For 1993 through 1997, if the amount generated pursuant to subdivisions (a), (b), and (c) of this subsection and the amount transferred pursuant to subsection (1) of this section are not sufficient to fund the credits provided in section 66-1344, then the credits shall be funded through the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund but shall not be funded through either the Highway Cash Fund or the Highway Trust Fund. For 1998 and each year thereafter, the credits provided in such section shall be funded through the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund but shall not be funded through either the Highway Cash Fund or the Highway Trust Fund.

(3) The State Treasurer shall transfer from the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund to the Management Services Expense Revolving Fund the amount reported under subsection (4) of section 66-1345.02 for each calendar month of the fiscal year as provided in such subsection.

(4) On December 31, 2012, the State Treasurer shall transfer one-half of the unexpended and unobligated funds from the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund to the Nebraska Corn Development, Utilization, and Marketing Fund and Grain Sorghum Development, Utilization, and Marketing Fund in the same proportion as funds were collected pursuant to section 66-1345.01 from corn and grain sorghum. The Department of Agriculture shall assist the State Treasurer in determining the amounts to be transferred to the funds. The remaining one-half of the unexpended and unobligated funds shall be transferred to the General Fund.

(5) Whenever the unobligated balance in the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund exceeds ~~fifteen~~ twenty million dollars, the Department of Revenue shall notify the Department of Agriculture at which time the Department of Agriculture shall suspend collection of the excise tax levied pursuant to section 66-1345.01. If, after suspension of the collection of such excise tax, the balance of the fund falls below ~~eight~~ ten million dollars, the Department of Revenue shall notify the Department of Agriculture which shall resume collection of the excise tax.

(6) On or before December 1, 2003, and each December 1 thereafter, the Department of Revenue and the Nebraska Ethanol Board shall jointly submit a report to the Legislature which shall project the anticipated revenue and expenditures from the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund through the termination of the ethanol production incentive programs pursuant to section 66-1344. The initial report shall include a projection of the amount of ethanol production for which the Department of Revenue has entered agreements to provide ethanol production credits pursuant to section 66-1344.01 and any additional ethanol production which the Department of Revenue and the Nebraska Ethanol Board reasonably anticipate may qualify for credits pursuant to section 66-1344.

Sec. 8. Section 66-1345.01, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

66-1345.01. An excise tax is levied upon all corn and grain sorghum sold through commercial channels in Nebraska or delivered in Nebraska. For any sale or delivery of corn or grain sorghum occurring on or after July 1, 1995, and before January 1, 2000, the tax is three-fourths cent per bushel for corn and three-fourths cent per hundredweight for grain sorghum. For any sale or delivery of corn or grain sorghum occurring on or after January 1, 2000, and before January 1, 2001, the tax is one-half cent per bushel for corn and one-half cent per hundredweight for grain sorghum. For any sale or delivery of corn or grain sorghum occurring on or after October 1, 2001, and before October 1, 2009, the tax is one-half cent per bushel for corn and one-half cent per hundredweight for grain sorghum. The tax shall be in addition to any fee imposed pursuant to sections 2-3623 and 2-4012. ~~The Legislature finds and declares that those in production agriculture have contributed sufficiently to~~

~~support the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund by the imposition of the excise tax. If additional funds are needed in the future to meet the Legislature's obligation to fully fund the Ethanol Production Incentive Cash Fund, these funds should come from sources other than production agriculture.~~

The excise tax shall be imposed at the time of sale or delivery and shall be collected by the first purchaser. The tax shall be collected, administered, and enforced in conjunction with the fees imposed pursuant to sections 2-3623 and 2-4012. The tax shall be collected, administered, and enforced by the Department of Agriculture. No corn or grain sorghum shall be subject to the tax imposed by this section more than once.

In the case of a pledge or mortgage of corn or grain sorghum as security for a loan under the federal price support program, the excise tax shall be deducted from the proceeds of such loan at the time the loan is made. If, within the life of the loan plus thirty days after the collection of the excise tax for corn or grain sorghum that is mortgaged as security for a loan under the federal price support program, the grower of the corn or grain sorghum so mortgaged decides to purchase the corn or grain sorghum and use it as feed, the grower shall be entitled to a refund of the excise tax previously paid. The refund shall be payable by the department upon the grower's written application for a refund. The application shall have attached proof of the tax deducted.

The excise tax shall be deducted whether the corn or grain sorghum is stored in this or any other state. The excise tax shall not apply to the sale of corn or grain sorghum to the federal government for ultimate use or consumption by the people of the United States when the State of Nebraska is prohibited from imposing such tax by the Constitution of the United States and laws enacted pursuant thereto.

Sec. 9. Section 77-4104.01, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

77-4104.01. The following transactions or activities shall not create any credits or allow any benefits under the Employment and Investment Growth Act except as specifically allowed by this section:

(1) The acquisition of a business which is continued by the taxpayer and which was operated in this state during the three hundred sixty-six days prior to the date of application or the date of acquisition, whichever is later. All employees of the acquired business during such period shall be considered base-year employees, and the compensation paid during the base year or the year before acquisition, whichever is later shall be the base-year compensation. Any investment in the acquisition of such business shall be considered as being made before the date of application;

(2) The moving of a business from one location to another, which business was operated in this state during the three hundred sixty-six days prior to the date of application. All employees of the business during such three hundred sixty-six days shall be considered base-year employees;

(3) The purchase or lease of any property which was previously owned by the taxpayer or a related person. The first purchase by either the taxpayer or a related person shall be treated as investment if the item was first placed in service in this state after the date of the application;

(4) The renegotiation of any lease in existence on the date of application which does not materially change any of the terms of the lease, other than the expiration date, shall be presumed to be a transaction entered into for the purpose of generating benefits under the act and shall not be allowed in the computation of any benefit or the meeting of any required levels under the agreement;

(5) Any purchase or lease of property from a related person, except that the taxpayer will be allowed any benefits under the Employment and Investment Growth Act to which the related person would have been entitled on the purchase or lease of the property if the related person was considered the taxpayer; ~~and~~

(6) Any transaction entered into primarily for the purpose of receiving benefits under the act which is without a business purpose and does not result in increased economic activity in the state; and

(7) For applications received after the effective date of this act, any activity that results in benefits under the Ethanol Development Act.

Sec. 10. Section 77-5536, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, is amended to read:

77-5536. (1) The board shall determine whether to approve the company's application by majority vote based on its determination as to whether the project will sufficiently help enable the state to accomplish the purposes of the Invest Nebraska Act. The board shall be governed by and shall take into consideration all of the following factors in making its determination:

(a) The timing, number, wage levels, employee benefit package, and types of new jobs to be created by the project;

(b) The type of industry in which the company and the project would be engaged;

(c) The timing, amount, and types of investment in qualified property to be made at the project; and

(d) Whether the board believes the project would occur in this state regardless of whether the application was approved.

(2) The weight given to each factor shall be determined by each board member individually for each application. The decision of the board shall be made in open meeting and is not confidential.

(3) A project shall be considered eligible under the act and may be approved by the board only if the application defines a project consistent with the purposes contained in section 77-5502 in one or more qualified business activities within this state that will result in (a) the investment in qualified property of at least ten million dollars and the hiring of a number of new employees of at least twenty-five. The investment and new employees for such project shall count towards attaining and maintaining such thresholds only if the qualified property is located in, and the employee's principal place of employment for the company is located in, one or more Nebraska counties having a population of less than one hundred thousand individuals as of the end of the base year. For this purpose, the population shall be conclusively determined by the Department of Revenue, (b) the investment in qualified property of at least fifty million dollars and the hiring of a number of new employees of at least five hundred, (c) the investment in qualified property of at least one hundred million dollars and the hiring of a number of new employees of at least two hundred fifty, or (d) the investment in qualified property of at least two hundred million dollars and the hiring of a number of new employees of at least five hundred.

(4) The new investment and employment shall occur within seven years, meaning by the end of the sixth year after the end of the year the application was filed, and shall be maintained for the entire entitlement period. These thresholds shall constitute the required levels of employment and investment for purposes of the act.

(5)(a) An individual employed by the company, other than a base-year employee, shall be considered an employee for purposes of attaining and maintaining the required number of new employees and shall be considered an employee whose compensation is included in the calculation of the wage benefit credit only if the compensation paid by the company to such employee for the year is (i) for companies qualifying under the ten million dollar investment and twenty-five new employee threshold under subdivision (3)(a) of this section, at least one hundred percent of the Nebraska average annual wage, (ii) for companies qualifying under the fifty million dollar investment and five hundred new employee threshold under subdivision (3)(b) of this section or the one hundred million dollar investment and two hundred fifty new employee threshold under subdivision (3)(c) of this section, at least one hundred ten percent of the Nebraska average annual wage; and (iii) for the companies applying under the two hundred million dollar investment and five hundred new employee threshold of subdivision (3)(d) of this section, at least one hundred twenty percent of the Nebraska average annual wage.

(b) For the purposes of subdivision (a) of this subsection, compensation paid by the company to such employee for the year shall be the amount paid for the entire year for regular hours worked, not including overtime, bonuses, or any other irregular payments. If the employee works for less than a year, the compensation paid will be annualized solely for the purpose of comparison with the Nebraska average annual wage.

(6) If the project application is approved by the board, the company and the state shall enter into a written agreement, which shall be executed on behalf of the state by the Tax Commissioner. In the agreement the company shall agree to complete the project and the state shall designate the approved plans of the company as a project and, in consideration of the company's agreement, agree to allow the wage benefit credit or the investment tax credit, as applicable, as provided for in the act. The application, and all supporting documentation, to the extent approved, shall be deemed a part of the agreement. The agreement shall contain such terms and conditions as the board shall specify in order to carry out the legislative purposes of the act. The agreement shall contain provisions to allow the Department of Revenue to verify that the required levels of employment and investment have been attained and maintained. The agreement shall contain provisions to require verification that the required levels have been attained before any credits are used. The agreement shall contain such other conditions or requirements, if any, for the company as established by the department to carry out the

purposes of the act.

(7) Any investment or employment which is eligible for benefits under the Quality Jobs Act shall not be included in a project under the Invest Nebraska Act. A project under the Invest Nebraska Act may involve the same location as another project under the Invest Nebraska Act or under the Quality Jobs Act, except that no new employment or new investment shall be included in more than one project for either the meeting of the employment or investment requirements or the creation of tax incentives. When projects overlap and the project application does not otherwise clearly specify, the company shall specify in which project the employment and investment belongs. ~~Any~~

(8) For applications for projects that are not receiving benefits under the Ethanol Development Act or applications filed before the effective date of this act, any employment or investment which is eligible for benefits under the Invest Nebraska Act may also be included in, and create incentives for, a project under the Employment and Investment Growth Act, the Employment Expansion and Investment Incentive Act, and the Rural Economic Opportunities Act, to the extent otherwise allowable under such respective acts. For applications filed on or after the effective date of this act, a taxpayer that is receiving benefits under the Ethanol Development Act may not receive benefits under the Invest Nebraska Act for the project that generates the incentive under the Ethanol Development Act.

~~(8)~~ (9) In order to provide the degree of certainty necessary to enable a project to proceed, and notwithstanding any provision of Nebraska statute or common law to the contrary, to the extent any such right of appeal or challenge otherwise exists, no appeal or challenge of the board's decision by any person shall be filed after the expiration of thirty days after the board's decision.

Sec. 11. Original sections 66-482, 66-1330, 66-1333, 66-1344, 66-1344.01, 66-1345, 66-1345.01, 77-4104.01, and 77-5536, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska, are repealed.

Sec. 12. The following section is outright repealed: Section 66-1346, Reissue Revised Statutes of Nebraska.

Sec. 13. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.