

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

Executive Board
March 15, 2010

[LR335]

The Executive Board of the Legislative Council met at 12:00 P.M. on Monday, March 15, 2010, in Room 2102 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of a conducting a public hearing on LR335. Senators present: John Wightman, Chairperson; John Nelson, Vice Chairperson; Mark Christensen; Deb Fischer; Russ Karpisek; Chris Langemeier; and Tom White. Senators absent: Mike Flood, Rich Pahls; and Lavon Heidemann.

SENATOR WIGHTMAN: I think we have everybody that is going to be here so we'll go ahead and get started. Good afternoon and welcome to the public hearing of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council. I would like to introduce you to the members of the Executive Board and board staff, and then briefly explain the procedure we will be following this afternoon. As far as introduction, first, to my right, is Janice Satra, legal counsel of the board. To her right is Senator John Nelson from Omaha, Vice Chair of the Executive Committee. To his right, Senator Russ Karpisek from Wilber. Senator Flood...Speaker Flood is not with us today and I don't think he'll be in. Senator Mark Christensen is right of Senator Karpisek, from Imperial. And Senator Lavon Heidemann from Elk Creek would be to his right and is not here this afternoon, or this...I guess it's afternoon. To my left, Jessica Shelburn, committee clerk. To her right, Senator Chris Langemeier from Schuyler. Senator Rich Pahls, who would be to his right, is absent. Senator Deb Fischer from Valentine, and Senator Tom White from Omaha. We will first hear testimony from the introducer of the resolution in this case, followed by those in favor of it, and then testimony in opposition, and finally we will hear from those who have a neutral testimony. We welcome anyone to testify but I ask that you not be repetitive and that you try and keep your testimony to three minutes. Sign-in sheets are available at the testifier table. Please fill the form out completely before you come up, and hand it to the page before you begin your testimony. And some of you may have letters of support or opposition that you want to place into the record, and the page will assist you with that. So with that, we'll open the hearing on LR335 and recognize Senator Mello as the introducer of that. []

SENATOR MELLO: (Exhibits 1-4) Good afternoon, Chairman Wightman, members of the Executive Board Committee. My name is Heath Mello, H-e-a-t-h M-e-l-l-o, and I represent the 5th Legislative District. I introduced LR335, a resolution that would create the Clean Energy Economic Committee, a committee made up of seven legislators appointed by the Executive Board. The main purpose of the Clean Energy Economic Committee is to develop a statewide action plan that would optimize the growth of the clean energy economy in Nebraska. This action plan would be submitted to the Legislature on or before June 30, 2011, the same date the Clean Energy Economic Committee would sunset. The statewide action plan includes analysis of the following factors: the business opportunities and needs of the clean energy economy in the local, state, national, and international markets; the labor force needs related to such

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business opportunities, including educational, training, and retraining needs; and an inventory of the current labor and business assets available to respond to such business opportunities and labor force needs. The statewide action plan will also include recommendations, including legislation and budget requests, administrative actions of governmental entities, collaborative actions, and actions of individuals and individual organizations. I know that there is some concern that the purpose of the Clean Energy Economic Committee would be to create a renewable energy standard. Let me be clear that the intent of LR335 is not to drive the Legislature towards wide-sweeping policy changes like a renewable energy standard. Instead, the intent is to prepare Nebraska for the coming transition to a clean energy economy. The Clean Energy Economic Committee and resulting statewide action plan are imperative for Nebraska to remain competitive in a changing economy. LR335 will arm the Legislature with the data and analysis about the clean energy economy and will provide our state with a framework to deliver this vital analysis in the form of a comprehensive clean energy action plan: one that looks at renewable energy as well as manufacturing opportunities, financing opportunities, current barriers, and a number of other factors. In closing I'd like to point out that LR335 has 21 cosponsors. There is broad support for LR335 because the new clean energy economy is already a reality. We have all read the articles about how other states, neighboring states like Iowa and Minnesota, and more distant states like Texas and North Carolina, are grabbing ahold of the clean energy economy and making it work for them. I would like to take this opportunity...the page had already distributed the state of Minnesota's Green Jobs Task Force Action Plan. This plan is a good example of what I would like to see the Clean Energy Economic Committee accomplish for Nebraska through the passage of LR335. Nebraska has a history of utilizing what we already have in order to compete in an ever-changing marketplace, be it rivers, open spaces, or our central location. The clean energy economy is no different, and if we're going to remain competitive, LR335 is an important first step in examining where we are at and where we need to be going. With that, that concludes my testimony. Also the page has passed out letters of support from Metropolitan Utilities District, the Omaha Public Power District, as well as the AFL-CIO. The committee should be receiving a letter from the Sierra Club of Nebraska. And it's my understanding in talking with the State Chamber of Commerce that they have a process that needs to take place before they can submit a letter of support, but they have expressed that they share a favorable light on this issue and on LR335 right now. [LR335]

SENATOR WIGHTMAN: Senator Mello, we will place the three letters and the report of the Minnesota's Green Jobs Task Force Action Plan in the record and make them part of the record. I gather from what you say, you're not interested in making this clean energy standards. That you're looking at it more from an economic standpoint and a strategic plan that would make this part of a larger plan, but not interested in setting standards, and I appreciate that. [LR335]

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SENATOR MELLO: That's correct, Senator Wightman. Just knowing the gargantuan workload that the Natural Resources Committee did this year on LB1048 with just the wind exporting bill, this is a...takes a different kind of approach than just looking at one type of energy. Once again, it incorporates energy efficiency, manufacturing green products that might come from the clean energy economy such as a bill that actually is in Transportation dealing with light electric vehicles, things along those lines that are all-encompassing beyond just the energy production aspect. It looks at more of the economic opportunities we have for the by-products and the other aspects of the economy that come with diversified energy outputs. [LR335]

SENATOR WIGHTMAN: Thank you, Senator Mello. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Just...we have a lot of people here. How many are planning to testify in favor of LR335? Anybody planning to testify in opposition? Anybody in a neutral capacity? Thank you. I guess, Senator Mello, (laughter) the opposition is just too great to take on that task. Is that right? I guess that ends our public hearing on LR335. Thank you for your attendance. [LR335]