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**HANSEN:** All right, good afternoon and welcome to the Executive Board. My name is Senator Ben Hansen. I represent the 16th Legislative District in Washington, Burt, Cuming, and parts of Stanton Counties, and I serve as Chair of the Executive Board. I'd like to invite the members of the committee to introduce themselves, starting on my right with Senator Clements.

**CLEMENTS:** Rob Clements, District 2.

**McKINNEY:** Terrell McKinney, District 11.

**BALLARD:** Beau Ballard, District 21.

**FREDRICKSON:** John Fredrickson, District 20.

**HANSEN:** Also assisting the committee is our legal counsel Benson Wallace, our committee clerk Natalie Schunk, and our committee page Lexi. A few notes about our policy and procedures. Please turn off or silence your cell phones. We'll be hearing three bills, and we'll be taking them in the order listed outside the hearing room. On the table near the door to the hearing room, you'll find green testifier sheets. If you're planning to testify today, please fill one out and hand it to the page when you come up to testify. This will help us keep an accurate record of the hearing. If you are not testifying at the microphone but want to go on-record as having a position on a bill being heard today, there are yellow sign-in sheets at the entrance, where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. Also, I would note, if you are not testifying but have an online position comment to submit, the Legislature's policy is that all comments, comments for the record must be received by the committee by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. Any handouts submitted by testifiers will also be included as part of the record as exhibits. We would ask if you do have any handouts that you please bring 12 copies and give them to the page. We use a light system for testifying. Each testifier will have three minutes to testify. When you begin, the light will be green. When the light-- when the light turns yellow, that means you have one minute left. When the lights turns red, it is time to end your testimony, and we will ask you to wrap, wrap up your final thoughts. When you come up to testify, please begin by stating your name clearly into the microphone, and then please

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spell both your first and last name. The hearing will begin with each introducer giving an opening statement. We will then hear from supporters of the bill, then those in opposition, then those in a neutral capacity. The introducer of the bill will then be given the opportunity to make closing statements if they wish to do so. On a side note, the reading of testimony that is not your own is not allowed unless previously approved, and we do have a strict no-prop policy in this committee. So, with that, we will start today's hearings with LR304 and welcome Senator Fredrickson.

**FREDRICKSON:** All right.

**HANSEN:** Welcome.

**FREDRICKSON:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Chair Hansen, and members of the Executive Board. For the record, my name is John Fredrickson, J-o-h-n F-r-e-d-r-i-c-k-s-o-n, and I represent District 20, which is in central-west Omaha. I am here today to introduce LR304. LR304 was brought in an effort to enhance oversight regarding several DHHS children and family service cost savings initiatives in recent years. The contractual changes for relative and kin foster care last summer launched broader discussions within the sector about the totality of the impact of all of these changes, workforce stability, and questions for the strategic direction of the future. The department's mid-biennium budget deficit requested cited-- request cited the conversion of contracted services to new internal positions within DHHS. Over the last few years, there have been ongoing-- there has been an ongoing trend, including the termination of or modified utilization of several contracted services including the lead-- lead agency case management in 2021, new case manager training in 2024, family finding in 2024, home studies in 2025, relative and kin foster care in 2025, Foster Care Closet in 2025, and family support in 2026. In response to these changes for relative kin and kin foster care support, the Lincoln Journal-Star editorial board wrote on September 25, 2025, quote, even if HHS's projections add up, which is doubtful, the new policy is yet another example of heartless budget-cutting that will, despite assurances otherwise, hurt the kids and the foster families who should receive the best possible protection from the state, end quote.

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This is something that we have seen DHSS try to do in the past, and I think the Legislature should be very wary of these cost-cutting measures. In addition to the contractual changes, the department has also initiated a new comprehensive foster care program, thinned out their administration and supervision of the service area regions from five to two service area administrators, and proposed the elimination of the alternative response subcommittee of the Nebraska Children's Commission in pending legislation being heard in the HHS committee. We have issues in the YRTC's, and a recent report on serious injuries of children involved in alternative response from the Office of the Inspector General of Child Welfare issued last summer. There are several major changes underway. Like many child welfare reforms in the past, the Legislature has designated special oversight committees-- LR37 in 2011, LR29 in 2022-- to examine such reforms and make recommendations for stability. LR304 calls upon the 109th Legislature to do the same. It is my understanding this is the first time a resolution has been introduced to direct the work of the Legislative Oversight Committee, and how that work is accomplished through committee support or staff still needs to be worked out. Those are important questions that need to be addressed. In the past, committee staff have supported child welfare oversight resolutions, but we haven't run into this yet with the Legislative Oversight Committee since it's still being worked out how a resolution like this would become operationalized. I am committed to working with the Executive Board and the Oversight Committee to look at the best ways to do just that moving forward. With that, I will take any questions from the committee.

**HANSEN:** All right, thank you. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Dorn.

**DORN:** Thank you, thank you Senator. And thank you for bringing this bill, and you and I have visited a couple times about this, and--

**FREDRICKSON:** Yes.

**DORN:** --visited a little bit with Jennifer Carter, our oversight person too. And the, the timelines, I guess, that's the biggest challenge.

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**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah, yeah.

**DORN:** Not, not that they couldn't do the thing, but to get it done in what the timelines are listed in this LR--

**FREDRICKSON:** Mm-hmm.

**DORN:** Probably not workable or doable.

**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah. No, I appreciate that. So yeah [INAUDIBLE] and so Senator Dorn, who is also the chair of our Legislative Oversight Committee, and so we've had that conversation about the timeline. I have an amendment that adjusts the timeline to look at something that was hopefully a bit more workable. And, you know, like I said in my opening, since the establishment of the lever-- Legislative Oversight Committee-- it was funny, when I was actually getting this drafted, I had to go back and forth with Bill Drafters and the Clerk, et cetera because we weren't quite sure whether or not things could be directly referred to, to that committee. So, part of this is also kind of figuring out how that committee actually functions and, and, and operates with-- within our, within our body.

**HANSEN:** Speaker Arch.

**ARCH:** I'm sure you also considered doing something like this within the HHS committee itself? Why-- I mean, obviously the subject-matter jurisdiction committee.

**FREDRICKSON:** Yup. Yup.

**ARCH:** Why Legislative Oversight Committee versus the HHS Committee? Some of these issues have been before that committee, you sit on that committee.

**FREDRICKSON:** Understood. Yeah. So, I, I, I thought about both. You know, the, the-- and I, and I, I will say I'm not necessarily married to the Legislative Oversight Committee per se. I do think that, you know, given the establishment of that committee, a lot of what I'm looking for is our constitutional responsibility of oversight as, as a branch. And so, knowing that we had this newly-created committee, that was kind of the

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initial thinking about referring it explicitly to that, just as that's sort of the committee for oversight. But certainly, this, this oversight is very specific to HHS, and so I think certainly could be appropriate there as well.

**HANSEN:** Senator Clements.

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Senator. I was wondering-- the-- I'm on the Oversight Committee, and in the committee, we vote on what topics to take up and what studies to do, and audits. Why are you proposing to force the committee to do something that normally they vote internally to do?

**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah. Well, so, part of the reason I appreciate that question is-- so, some of the recent changes that have been proposed by DHHS, specifically as it relates to the foster care system, has been brought to my attention over the past couple years. And so, what really caught my eye was this theme that I've seen within DHHS saying that they're going to be bringing a number of resources and services in-house without presenting evidence that they have the staffing, training or ability to do so. So, my professional background is in social work. I-- before I got my master's degree, I worked as a case manager. I'm, I'm very intimately familiar with the responsibilities that case managers have. With the current numbers that DHHS has, bringing in-house the amount of services that they want is not a realistic thing to happen. And so, I felt strongly, given our history, for example, with St. Francis, when we've tried to fill budget deficits with cuts to costs as it relates to child welfare, we've seen how that has been really harmful to, to a number of Nebraskans. And so, that-- that's sort of what inspired this, to take legislative action, to say, hey, we're, we're, we're kind of getting all the red flags here. We're being told that things are moving in house, we're not being presented with concrete evidence or plans for whether it's increased training, increased staffing. In the HHS committee, we're, we're constantly told that DHHS is taking on a lot more responsibilities as it relates to Medicaid and a number things, and that they need no additional staff, so.

**CLEMENTS:** One more question.

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**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah.

**CLEMENTS:** Is this a-- would this be mandating that committee to do a study? Or-- it says it "calls on" the committee to do this, so would it be still up to the committee's discretion?

**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah, I mean I would certainly defer to, to the committee in that way. Yeah.

**CLEMENTS:** OK. Thank you.

**FREDRICKSON:** Yeah.

**HANSEN:** All right. Seeing no other questions. I'm assuming you'll stay to close.

**FREDRICKSON:** I will. Yes.

**HANSEN:** All right, so we'll take our first testifier in favor of LR304.

**ASHLEY BROWN:** Good afternoon. Chair Hansen and members of the Executive Board, my name is Ashley Brown, A-s-h-l-e-y B-r-o-w-n. I serve as the president for KVC Nebraska, a non-profit organization providing a broad range of services to children, adults, and families across the state. I also have the privilege of serving as the President of the Children and Family Coalition of Nebraska, also known as CAFCON. This is a coalition of ten member organizations delivering critical services across our great state. Both CAFCON and KVC are in strong support of LR304. CAFCON agencies are long-standing trusted partners in Nebraska's community-based service system. We've walked alongside DHHS through multiple eras of reform, transition, and recalibration. Our legacy is built on adapting to emerging needs, delivering evidence-based, outcome-driven interventions, and maintaining deep generational relationships with communities and donors across your districts and beyond. Simply put, providers, not just CAFCON providers, have remained the steady constant through term limits, administrative changes, and evolving state priorities. Over the last 20 years, the state has worked to find the right balance in public-private partnership and to maximize federal IV-E opportunities. Those efforts, often well-intended,

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have also led to involuntary, rapid, and deeply disruptive shifts that have affected children, families, the workforce, and service providers. And in recent years, we have seen contracts for critical services eliminated or sort of absorbed within the department, particularly those supporting placement stability and permanency. Today, we are watching the pendulum swing towards a model of state-administered services reminiscent of about two decades ago. We have significant concerns about whether an already-overextended state system can safely absorb expanded responsibilities and still provide the level of supervision and high-quality direct service families deserve. Case management quality communication and turnover has not improved, and there's a presumption that that's related to unmanageable workloads. The Legislature-- ah, excuse me. The Legislature has historically stepped in during periods of system instability or failed transitions, especially when cost-saving initiatives produce unintended harm. Your leadership has resulted in oversight mechanisms for caseload sizes, alternative response, the YRTCs, readiness assessments for lead agency transitions, procurement reforms, and rate parity for foster caregivers among other safeguards. Those actions mattered, and they made the system safer for families. Given the statewide impact of recent contract reductions and the expanding role of DHHS, we believe additional oversight is not only appropriate, but necessary to ensure that changes are safe, sustainable, and aligned with the best interests of families that we all collectively serve. Thank you, Senator Fredrickson, for bringing this resolution forward, and thank you to all of you for your attention and ongoing commitment to Nebraska's children and families.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you.

**ASHLEY BROWN:** You're welcome.

**HANSEN:** Do we have any questions from the committee? Speaker Arch.

**ARCH:** I'm assuming your concern is, is central to the, to the issues that are in front of us. The old-- that the Legislature provide oversight, not necessarily to what body within the Legislature provides that oversight.

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**ASHLEY BROWN:** I would agree, Senator, yes.

**ARCH:** OK.

**ASHLEY BROWN:** I think the ask is providers have a lot of oversight and are required a lot compliance measures, and so this isn't about saying that these changes are necessarily bad changing; we're asking for accountability and transparency and oversight generally. So wherever that is determined to be-- to fit best, I, I think, makes--

**ARCH:** All right. Thank you.

**ASHLEY BROWN:** Yeah.

**HANSEN:** All right. Seeing no other questions. Thank you.

**ASHLEY BROWN:** Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. Take our next testifier in support of LR304. Welcome.

**MONIKA GROSS:** Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Hansen, and members of the Executive Board. My name is Monika Gross, M-o-n-i-k-a G-r-o-s-s, and I'm the executive director of the foster care review office. I may need a little extra time to get through everything today. The Legislature has historically taken a keen interest in Nebraska's child welfare and juvenile justice systems. In 2011, the Legislature passed LR37, which tasked the HHS Committee with reviewing, investigating and assessing the child welfare reform initiative implemented by DHHS, including contracts with private lead agencies. The Health and Human Services Committee submitted a report to the Legislature which included 18 recommendations. Following the LR37 report, there were numerous assessments and evaluations of Nebraska child welfare. I've included a non-exhaustive list of 11 reports in my written materials. One of the recommendations in the LR37 report was to create the Nebraska Children's Commission, which was created in 2012. The Nebraska Children's Commission is tasked with determining 3 to 5 strategic child welfare priorities for research or policy development each biennium. Under the Nebraska Children's Commission, committees are tasked with monitoring,

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reviewing, assessing, examining, and making recommendations regarding various aspects of child welfare and juvenile justice, including juvenile services, bridge to independence, foster care reimbursement rates, the Strengthening Families Act, and alternative response. The Nebraska Children's Commission is also tasked with analyzing child welfare workforce issues and making recommendations to DHHS and the Legislature. I suggest adding the Nebraska Children's Commission to the list of entities with which the committee would be required to consult, and perhaps even delegate some of the work described in LR304. LB1173 was passed by the Legislature in 2022, tasking the three branches of government to work together to transform child and family well-being in Nebraska. One of the strategic priorities identified by that work group was to develop accountability and oversight mechanisms with effective performance measures. The community engagement strategies included in the practice model emphasize the involvement of all three branches of government in the work of transforming Nebraska child welfare. This involves developing more accountabilities, not less. More transparency, not less, will result in increased confidence and trust among policymakers, service providers, and most importantly, the families being served. Foster Care Review Office also provides some oversight as the independent state agency responsible for tracking children in out-of-home care, reviewing children's cases utilizing local volunteer citizen review boards, collecting and analyzing data related to the children, and making recommendations on conditions and outcomes for Nebraska's children. The FCRO's oversight-- may I finish? I'm almost finished.

**HANSEN:** Yeah, you've got-- [INAUDIBLE] like, 30 seconds.

**MONIKA GROSS:** The FCRO's oversight takes place on two levels: the individual case level and the systemic level. We review cases of individual children. Simultaneously, we collect data in our tracking system and from every case file review to create a system-wide view of trends and outcomes. We track, we review, we report. However, our oversight is limited to children and youth in out-of-home care. We do not have authority to review children involved with in-home, non-court cases, alternative response cases, prevention cases, or ongoing investigations. This is not an exhaustive list of oversight mechanisms, but those I'm most

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familiar with. At times of substantial systemic change, it is appropriate for the Legislature to exercise its oversight authority to make sure that the quality of care and service provision is maintained at the highest level. Thank you, Senator Fredrickson, for introducing LR304, and thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you.

**MONIKA GROSS:** Thank you.

**HANSEN:** We'll take our next testifier in support of LR304. Anyone else in support? All right. Welcome.

**SCHALISHA WALKER:** Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Schalisha Walker, S-c-h-a-l-i-s-h-a W-a-l-k-e-r, and I'm the child welfare program director at Nebraska Appleseed, which works to improve Nebraska's child welfare system, and we support LR304. Nebraska's child welfare system has an obligation to protect, support, and serve the most vulnerable families and children. As a public system, part of that responsibility is to seek public input and be transparent, especially to those moving through the system who are most affected. This, however, is not consistently happening. Over our 20-plus years working directly with youth and families interacting with the, with the system, one of the greatest frustrations we've heard is that their voice and choice is not heard. They lack seats at decision-making tables, authentic opportunities for input, and, like the rest of the public, learn about sweeping systemic changes after the fact, especially lately. We're seeing so many unexpected changes in the system today, including major contract changes, regulation cuts, and more. And these changes are happening abruptly, without the knowledge of providers or the public, and have the potential to be devastating and destabilizing to vulnerable families and children this system is charged to protect, disrupting their case plans, and ultimate-- the-- ultimately, their exit from the system. Throughout a foster care case, a family has to consistently engage with services, the state, and the court to prove that they're stable and safe enough to leave care. How can they demonstrate stability if the system is consistently changing? Not only does Nebraska's child

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welfare system lack transparency when it comes to changes, its attempts at reforms have been repeated and ineffective. In the last eight years, Nebraska has hired external child welfare consultants at least seven times. These evaluations often recommend the same things, and are, and are conducted with little to no input from the most important stakeholders, the families who interact with these systems. For example, in 2022, this Legislature required Nebraska hire a consultant to comprehensively transform the child welfare system after a tumultuous decade. While consultants included listening sessions across Nebraska-- they were open to system providers and the public-- the number of impacted individuals who attended these listening sessions were extremely low, and the final draft of the report was provided to the public with only a few days for input, and, to our knowledge, the report has since been removed from public viewing without any answer as to what has changed. This demonstrates that what the Nebraska Legislature have tried so far is not working; LR304 proposes a new approach at a critical time using a mix of past work and current stakeholder voices. If the Legislature accepts this proposal, we encourage it to authentically engage with youth and families' voices, with intentionality, time, and flexibility. And, when asking for input from youth and families, they need to know and understand what changes are intended and how their input will be used. To ask youth and families to recount their experiences which can be re-traumatizing without them knowing what and how this will be used will be detrimental. Gathering information and experiences with the promise of creating change and then ultimately not taking those steps further feeds into our acute distrust of the system, no matter how well-intentioned. We support LR304's call for oversight and inclusion of impacted individuals to ensure families are receiving the support they need to thrive. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you. Anyone else wishing to testify in support? All right. Seeing none. Anybody wishing to testify an opposition to LR304? Anyone wishing to testify in a neutral capacity? All right. We'll welcome Senator Fredrickson back up, and for the record we did have 17 letters in support, 0 in opposition, and 0 neutral

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**FREDRICKSON:** Thank you, Chair Hansen. I'll keep the close fairly brief. Senator Clements, I-- you had asked about kind of a mandate on that. I, I think I spoke a bit in my introduction, so I want to just kind of clarify for the record. So, that-- that's part of why this would go-- should the Exec Board decide to advance this to the floor, the entire body would then have the opportunity to debate and vote on this. And so, should the entire Legislature decide that this would-- should pass, then, in effect, it would sort of instruct the committee to, to investigate that. So, I think I misspoke slightly on that earlier. I just want to clarify that for the record. I'll also say, if, if folks haven't had the opportunity to read some of the online comments, I think those are really helpful. They certainly give, I think, a first-hand perspective of the families that are most impacted by this and, and their experiences. But with that, I'll take any questions from the committee.

**HANSEN:** All right. Any questions from the committee? You're off the hook.

**FREDRICKSON:** All right. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. Well, that'll end the hearing on LR304, and then we will open it up for LR297CA and welcome Senator Machaela Cavanaugh.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Good afternoon--

**HANSEN:** Welcome.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** --Chairman Hansen and members of the Executive Board. My name is Machaela Cavanaugh, M-a-c-h-a-e-l-a C-a-v-a-n-a-u-g-h. I represent District 6 in west-central Omaha, and I'm here today to introduce LR297CA, a constitutional amendment dealing with how the Legislature amends laws enacted by initiative petition. I want to start with a simple reality: there is a deep and growing frustration among Nebraskans when laws they voted on and overwhelmingly approved are later changed by the Legislature. Whether you agree with a particular ballot initiative or not, the perception that the will of the voters can be undone inside the building is damaging to public trust.

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LR297CA does not take away the Legislature's authority to amend laws enacted by initiative petition; that authority remains. The two-thirds vote requirement, 33 votes, remains. What this resolution changes is when those amendments take effect. LR297CA, if-- under this CA, if the Legislature amends a voter-enacted law, the original law goes into effect as passed by the people; the Legislature's amendment would then be referred back to the ballot for approval by a majority of Nebraska voters before it could take effect. In short, if we change what the people pass, the people get the final say. This is not radical. It is respectful of the effort and civic engagement required to bring an initiative to the ballot in the first place. Collecting signatures is hard. It takes time, resources, and sustained public support. Nebraskans do not sign petitions lightly. Nebraskans also-- Nebraska also has a long and proud history of direct democracy. We adopted the initiative process in 1912 by a 93 percent vote. Our Nebra-- Unicameral Legislature itself exists because of a citizen-initiated constitutional amendment passed in 1934. Since statehood, voters have considered hundreds of ballot measures, both citizen-initiated and legislatively-referred. And while legislatively-referred measures tend to pass at higher rates, the initiative petition remains a critical tool for Nebraskans when they feel the Legislature is not responsive. If we want to preserve confidence in this institution, we should strengthen, not weaken, the initiative process. LR297CA does exactly that by reinforcing the partnership between the Legislature and the voters, and by making it clear that the ultimate authority still rests with the people. I'm happy to answer any questions.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Are there any questions from the committee? All right.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Easy.

**HANSEN:** Are you sticking around to close?

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Yes.

**HANSEN:** All right. Well, is there anybody who wishes to testify in favor of LR297CA? We don't get to see you in front of this committee very often. This is a-- this is a treat.

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**SPIKE EICKHOLT:** Thank you. Well, we'll see. Good afternoon, Chair Hansen, and members of the committee. My name is Spike Eickholt, S-p-i-k-e E-i-c-k-h-o-l-t. I'm appearing on behalf of the ACLU of Nebraska. We're generally in support of at least the conversation that this proposed constitutional amendment initiates, and that is, unfortunately-- and you've heard this on the floor during debate-- there seems to be a trend, if you will, of the Legislature undoing or modifying or doing legislative acts inconsistent with what the voters approve at the ballot. And what you see in recent election cycles is a-- really a robust initiative process happening on a variety of different issues. What Senator Machaela Cavanaugh has got proposed here is to at least allow the Legislature to amend, modify, alter, if you will, the things that are approved by the voters, but then also allow the voters to have one more final say on that, and that is a way to balance sort of the first house, if you will, of the Legislature, and then the second house, which is the people. I think the concept is pretty straightforward. One thing I just wanted to kind of mention on the record: there seems to be an argument that there's something wrong with the ballot process, if you will; that it's being manipulated by out-of-state interests. There are, I think, nine or ten initiatives in circulation now, and five of them are from people who are from Nebraska on a winner-take-all initiative, on a recalculation of property tax valuation, on a paper ballot-counting initiative, and there's also one that at least has some Nebraska connection, and that's a pair of online sports betting. And Senator Bostar, I think, called that last year, when the Legislature was debating a bill, that if the Legislature didn't do something, the people were going to, and I think that's what you see on a variety of different issues. And I don't know if that's a consequence of term limits, if it's just the consequence of the "hyperpoliticalization" of things now or what it is, but you see people using the ballot process, and unfortunately, the Legislature sometimes undoes that. The Legislature has that prerogative, of course. You have the authority and the power to do that. But our constitution requires you to act with a supermajority, and I would submit that that's because it's meant to be that way; that you can't simply, by a simple majority, undo or modify or change what the people do. It's got to be something demanding of your response

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and not just a policy disagreement. I'll answer any questions if you have any. I know it's over the lunch hour.

**HANSEN:** OK. Any questions from the committee? Senator Fredrickson.

**FREDRICKSON:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for being here. So, I, I probably should have asked this with the introducer [INAUDIBLE]. So, if this were to pass-- so the Leg-- let's say a ballot initiative occurs, the voters pass the ballot initiative, Legislature comes back the next year, makes some shifts or changes to that, then would the next election-- like, it would be back on the ballot, those changes? The next scheduled election, is that how that would work? Or what do you--

**SPIKE EICKHOLT:** That's how I envision it, yes.

**FREDRICKSON:** OK. So, not like a special election or--

**SPIKE EICKHOLT:** I don't know if it would be a special election. I should actually read the text a little more closely, if it's a special election or if it's just a general election.

**FREDRICKSON:** I can ask [INAUDIBLE].

**SPIKE EICKHOLT:** But that's right, it's sort of-- it-- the Legislature can modify. There's four adjectives that the constitution uses, if you will, for what the Legislature is allowed to do on something that's approved by the people. It's modify, alter, amend, or some other thing. Maybe repeal, I can't remember. But if the Legislature does that, then the Legislature also places that legislative act on the ballot for the voters to approve.

**FREDRICKSON:** Understood. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you. Anyone else wishing to testify in favor? Welcome.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Good afternoon. My name is Crista Eggers, C-r-i-s-t-a E-g-g-e-r-s, and I am on-- here on behalf of Nebraskans for Medical Marijuana, and we are in support of LR297.

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Nebraskans for Medical "Marijuany"-- ma-- let me start over. Nebraskans for Medical Marijuana strongly believes that the right of a citizens to a petition, and that when voters act through this process, they are expressing a power that is explicitly reserved to them in the constitution. Throughout Nebraska's history, the ballot initiative process has served as an essential, and often the only avenue for voters to express their will on issues that are important to them. Often, as it was with medical marijuana, ballot measures arise precisely because the Legislature has not been able to resolve an issue. Now, I want to recognize that voter-approved measures can sometimes create challenges for lawmakers tasked with implementation. Voter ID, paid sick, and medical cannabis are all measures passed by the people that have found themselves back in the crossfire of the Legislature. Lawmakers often are placed in the position of interpreting the expectation of their constituents after the vote. I come to this issue from a unique perspective. I have personally written five ballot initiatives: one in 2020, two in 2022, and the two measures approved by voters in 2024. Over the course of the three ballot cycles, I have traveled across the state directly engaging with Nebraskans. I have heard their expectations, their concerns, and their reason for planning to vote or voting how they did. Now, as we've moved into the implementation phase, I am also working on supporting legislation intended to reflect what voters voted for. In this process, I am consistently accounting competing narratives about what Nebraskans did or did not vote for. I believe Nebraskans and the constitution itself make it clear that when voters speak, their intent should not be subject to interpretation after the fact, and I'd like to highlight that one structural concern that has contributed to the challenges in Nebraska, I believe, is the single-subject requirement. This rule was intended to prevent voter confusion and ensure clarity. And while it sounds good in theory, in practice, it presents considerable difficulties in drafting ballot language. There is a very real challenge in making language clear and specific enough while also ensure it's narrow enough to survive legal scrutiny. The result is that important implementation details often cannot be included, even when they would have helped clarify the intent for voters and also for the Legislature. In the case of medical cannabis, full implementation would have required dozens of separate ballot initiatives to accomplish

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what voters reasonably understood as one policy decision. And in fact, even the single-subject rule seems to be interpreted differently, as we saw in a 2020 decision by the Supreme Court that had dissenting opinions. LR297 offers a constructive way forward at a time when there seems to be extreme concern and dwindling faith in the ballot process. When significant policy questions arise after voters have spoken, or when lawmakers believe meaningful changes are necessary, the single most democratic solution is to return those questions to the very people that approved them in the first place. It should be a shared priority for all that when voters act through ballot initiative, their power does not end at the ballot box. I respectfully ask that you give a yes vote to this bill. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. Any questions from the committee? Senator Fredrickson.

**FREDRICKSON:** Hi. How are you?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Doing good, thanks.

**FREDRICKSON:** OK, so you, I would say, is-- are probably one of the more seasoned ballot initiative people in our state. You've been in three-- involved in three of them?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Right.

**FREDRICKSON:** How do you-- I guess I'm kind of curious to hear from you, like, do you still believe in this process? Like, where, where, where is your head with this?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** I believe in the ballot process through and through when I am out talking with voters and collecting signatures. I am finding it hard to believe in the ballot process within the walls of this building.

**FREDRICKSON:** Thank you.

**HANSEN:** Senator McKinney.

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**McKINNEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. I've been stopped multiple times in public by voters, and they asked me, like, why do we vote for this or that and it's not occurring? Like, even medical marijuana, and it was something else, too. Multiple people just stopped me and said what, what was the point of my vote if it, it just don't even matter? So, do you think it would be disrespectful or burdensome for voters to have to vote again to clarify their vote?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** I don't-- no, I don't believe so. No more disrespectful than it is-- and burdensome on them to continuously come to committee hearings and testify and submit public testimony and come and talk with lawmakers. You know, sometimes protest. I, I believe that there is already, the way things are right now, a considerable burden on voters trying to affirm and make clear what they voted on. I have huge concern of the lack of belief in, in votes mattering anymore. That is what I hear over and over and over. And so, no, I don't think it's more burdensome. I think that-- I believe that this bill would likely be supported by, by most constituents that would like to have their voice given back to them in the process that they, they started in.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah.

**HANSEN:** Any other questions? Senator Jacobson.

**JACOBSON:** Well, I'm a little confused, because I think medical marijuana is a great example of-- really, what did, did the voters pass, and what law would have gone in place? In other words, the Legislature went its path of interpreting what the voters voted on. Many misbelieve that we implemented exactly what the voters did vote on, which was to appoint the commission and see to it it got appointed, which was done. So, as I understand the bill, that would not go into effect until two years later until the voters would have a chance to confirm that's what they want. So, what would have gone in place instead?

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**CRISTA EGGERS:** Well, I believe on the issue-- I'm just going to speak to medical cannabis--

**JACOBSON:** Yeah.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** --because that's really my scope. That-- believe after three ballot cycles and over a decade--

**JACOBSON:** No, I, I mean, the bill, the, the, the law that was passed, the ballot initiative that was passed, what were we to have implemented without any other-- without any other massaging?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah.

**JACOBSON:** What would the law have been, in your mind, after passing the initiative this, this, this last go?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Well, I believe that last session there was a bill brought actually by Senator Hansen. Hansen--

**JACOBSON:** No, I'm not talking about a bill, because it wouldn't have gone into effect until 2 years later.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** OK.

**JACOBSON:** So, what would we have amended-- what would we have implemented to serve as a proxy for the next 2 years?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** With all due respect, if you'll just give me a chance to-- I, I--

**JACOBSON:** Well, I just-- but answer the question I asked, is what I'd like you to do.

**HANSEN:** I think, I think what maybe Senator Jacobson-- if I can clarify-- the language that was in the ballot initiative, like, what would that have looked like just by itself, right? Without us doing anything to it. Like, he's-- I think he's probably wondering--

**JACOBSON:** Exactly.

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**HANSEN:** --what that would look like in Nebraska. What would, what would people of Nebraska be allowed to do if it was just the language [INAUDIBLE]?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** I believe the commission would have been established under 438, and they would be allowing all product types as given in the definition in 437 and 438. I believe that, as in, you know, situations like gambling, I believe the people expected that the Legislature would come in and make meaningful rules and regulations that reflected what was in the ballot language. And specifically, like, on an issue of medical cannabis, I think voters at, at this point, after 47 states have done this, did have good, good-faith expectations that similar-- the similar process would happen as it did in other states, which we are not seeing that happen here.

**JACOBSON:** Well, I'm, I'm just curious, getting back to what we just laid out. The commission would have been established. Would they have not been able to make any rules on their own? Or what-- how would that-- what would they have done?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** No, so they were given authority to make rules and regulations on basically the, the industry side of how a patient receives their medicine. So, the manufacture, distribution, delivery, and dispensing of cannabis.

**JACOBSON:** But where is that in-- where was that in the ballot initiative?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** That was in 438.

**JACOBSON:** No, I, I don't think it went so far as to say what they were, were allowed to do. It said they, they would be established.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** They, they have authority to create the rules and regulations on those five parts of the industry, whereas patient protections and position, you know, all of that was in-- held in 437.

**JACOBSON:** I-- and I, and I appreciate that. I, I guess my biggest concern is ballot initiatives by their own right don't

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have details. That's what the Legislature seems to have to put in place. And if we-- and if whatever the Legislature does to put it in place can't be implemented for two years until it's reconfirmed by the voters, it seems we're in Never-Never Land in the, in the next two years, until the next ballot. That-- that's my concern.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah.

**JACOBSON:** That's what I'm trying to clear up, is how does that work?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** I think my just personal opinion on medical cannabis is it will be two years before we actually have anything instated and into law and access. And, and I agree. I will tell you, I-- never ever did I want to go to the ballot three times ever. But I also sat in this place for a decade trying to use the legislative process to do something where those details and, and those concerns can be talked out and, and compromised on in reasonable ways. I believe the ballot process is there, and maybe it's used sometimes when, when other, you know, ways are not. But on this issue specifically, my life would be a lot better right now if something had gotten done in this body.

**JACOBSON:** And, and I, I would say that there are 49 state senators, each of whom were elected by their districts to represent them, and they pass laws here that take 25 votes to pass. And so, that's the process in the first house, if you will. And, and the first house has not been supportive of that, of, of your position.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Mm-hmm.

**JACOBSON:** And, and that's, that's what I'm saying, is that that's why it's taken so long, and why you've gone the initiative route, is because there wasn't consensus among the 49 state senators to go a different direction. So, so I understand the will of the people and the, and the, and the vote by the senators that have been elected by the people. I'm just-- I, I, I understand when there's disagreements, someone wants to go get redressed, and you can do that through a ballot initiative. But

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I'm, I'm still confused that when we do a ballot initiative by their own rights, they seem to have to have clarity brought to them, and the Legislature is going to have to bring that clarity. And if that clarity can't be implemented for two years, I don't know what you implement in the meantime.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah. Well, the-- unfortunately, the clarity that was, you know, on this issue that, that we tried to bring last year, you know, we, we couldn't get that way. So I, I agree, there's challenges on all sides. I just-- I'm here representing Nebraskans who, who made their vote very clear, sometimes once, twice, three times, or over a decade. And I believe taking it back to the people when there's this uncertainty and very much a dwindling faith in, in what this body interprets from ballot initiatives. I just-- I'm-- I don't have all the answers, but I feel firmly that voters would support having their voice given back to them on these type of issues.

**JACOBSON:** Well, I support, I support your concerns. I, I truly do. I'm not trying to be argumentative. I'm just-- I support your concern. I'm confused as to how we implement it if we were to pass this, this LR and if it were to [INAUDIBLE]. How would we implement that? That-- that's my confusion.

**HANSEN:** OK.

**JACOBSON:** But thank you.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah.

**HANSEN:** All right. Any other questions? Senator McKinney.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you, Chair Hansen. Am I right or wrong: every-- I think every legislative district that sent us here voted for medical marijuana?

**CRISTA EGGERS:** On 437, 4-- all 49, and on 438, the regulatory, 46 of the 49 passed it.

**McKINNEY:** So overwhelmingly, the people that sent us here wanted that too.

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**CRISTA EGGERS:** Each and every one of your constituents-- or, each of you have-- your constituents support this, yes.

**McKINNEY:** Thank you.

**CRISTA EGGERS:** Yeah.

**HANSEN:** All right. Seeing no other questions. Thank you. All right. Anybody else wishing to testify in support of LR297CA?

**\*SHANNON CORYELL:** I am a proponent of this bill because the ballot initiative is so important for a thriving democracy. The people should not only be allowed to choose their representatives but also vote on issues that are important to them. We vote on ballot issues when there is no movement on an issue legislatively. When an issue is put to the people instead of the legislators it carries more weight. Therefore the legislature should NOT be able to dismantle it, change it or outright kill it. Representative democracy is multifaceted and should be respected in all forms.

**HANSEN:** All right. Anybody wishing to testify in opposition? Anybody wishing to testify in neutral capacity? Seeing none. We'll welcome Senator Machaela Cavanaugh back up here. And for the record, we did have 47 letters in support, 9 in opposition, and 0 in the neutral capacity.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Chair Hansen, and members of the committee. To some of your concerns, Senator Jacobson. So, Senator Hansen brought legislation last year around medical marijuana. You're right, it's as, as passed not fully workable. And so, that's why the Legislature has that option to do things, and, and it's not ideal to have to wait two years to enact changes or do regulatory. But I'm not really sure what else to do, to be quite honest, because if we're going to make changes to things that are passed at the ballot, then there should be some opportunity, in my mind, for the voters to weigh in on that again. I will say that I think that the ballot process is, is really great for specific things. I think it's really hard to do policy at the ballot, and I'd like to see more policy happening within the Legislature. And, and to Ms. Eggers' point, she's been bringing this to the Legislature for over a decade. The

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entire time I've been here, this has been an issue. So, I think it would have been ideal if we would have taken it up at the legislative level, absolutely. But we do have a ballot initiative process so that the people do have a right to bring things if they so choose, and I'm just trying to find a path forward for how we can respect the will of the voters, but also do our jobs, if that makes sense.

**HANSEN:** Any questions from the committee? All right. Seeing none. Thank you.

**M. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right, that'll end our hearing for LR297CA and open it up for LR311CA, and welcome Senator John Cavanaugh. Welcome to your Executive Board.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you. It's my first time this year, so happy to be here. Thank you, Chair Hansen, and members of the Executive Board. My name is Senator John Cavanaugh, J-o-h-n C-a-v-a-n-a-u-g-h, and I represent the 9th Legislative District in midtown Omaha. I'm here to introduce LR311CA, a constitutional amendment that would be placed on the November ballot to establish an independent redistricting commission. As we've seen nationally, efforts from both parties to further entrench majorities by way of partisan gerrymandering has increasingly become the norm, with the back-and-forth results-- resulting in mid-decade redistricting efforts in Texas, California, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Virginia, among other states. There have even been talk of similar efforts in Nebraska. I brought this amendment because I firmly believe that voters should choose their elected representatives, not the other way around. This isn't a new concept. The Legislature has considered independent redistricting commissions in the past, including a bill in 2016 from Senator John Murante that was vetoed by Governor Ricketts. Senator Hunt introduced a version of this amendment in 2022. Having gone through redistricting in this body during the 2021 Special Session, I saw firsthand the bare-knuckle partisan politics that went into drawing these maps, the personal rivalries resulting in certain districts and senators being targeted, and the way senators maneuver to shore up their own political fortunes with more favorable districts. I don't think

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this process leads to a fair represen-- or representative boundaries, and an independent commission would be insulated from these motives. The-- this amendment would put the question to the voters whether the map should be drawn by the very elected officials who benefit from them, or an independent commission. I want to thank the committee for your time, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

**HANSEN:** All right. Any questions from the committee? Senator Fredrickson.

**FREDRICKSON:** Thank you, Chair Hansen. Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh, for being here and for bringing the bill. Yeah, no, I, I, I think some of, like, the arms races we've been seeing on both parties with the redrawing lately has been pretty difficult to watch, I think. I guess my question is, if, if we were to have, like-- so, so an independent commission, right? Like, what, what are, what are best practices around that, A. But B, if an independent commission does draw maps, then does, does the Legislature then have to approve those maps? And C, can the Legislature then just change those maps?

**J. CAVANAUGH:** So, in our version that we have here, the commission would be created in the beginning of the year that the census comes out, so here, it's March 1. Then, they would get some time to create maps, then they would send those to the Legislature, and the Legislature can accept or reject those maps. And if the Legislature rejects the maps, then it goes back to the commission to draw another map. And so, the Legislature doesn't have the ability to change the maps, but it can send back basically criticisms or, or suggestions to the commission, and then the commission makes changes and then submits it to the Legislature. Iowa, as example, has, I think, one of the better systems in the country where they-- if the legislature rejects the maps a certain number of times, then the last map basically gets forced on them. So, that-- we don't have that in here, so this sort of allows for an iterative process that is probably only bounded by time.

**FREDRICKSON:** Understood. Thank you.

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**HANSEN:** All right. Any other questions? Seeing none. We'll see you at close.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** I'll stick around.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Anybody wishing to testify in support of LR311CA? Welcome.

**SHERI St. CLAIR:** Thank you. Good afternoon. I am Sheri St. Clair, S-h-e-r-i S-t. C-l-a-i-r. I'm talking this afternoon on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Nebraska in support of LR311CA. For a number of years now, the position of the League of Women Voters is that responsibility for redistricting should be vested in an independent special commission with membership that reflects the diversity of units of government, including citizens at large, representatives of public interest groups, and members of minorities. And, as some of you know, the League has testified in support of similar legislation in years past, so we're consistent in our position. Although the structure of independent redistricting commissions vary somewhat from state to state, and some of it's mentioned in the handout that you have, IRCs are used in one form or another in 26 states. These commissions are consistent in that they prohibit the participation of political insiders. And, if you look beyond the United States, there's a lot of countries that we model ourselves after-- for example, Britain-- that redraw political maps as a responsibility handled also by an independent commission rather than partisan legislatures, so. So, as the League has consistently supported the creation of independent redistricting commissions, as we did extensively during the 2020-2021 cycle, we urge the board to advance LR311CA for full floor debate.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none.

**SHERI St. CLAIR:** All right. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** Thank you. Anybody else wishing to testify in support? Welcome.

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**GAVIN GEIS:** Good afternoon. Senator Hansen, members of the Executive Board, my name is Gavin Geis-- that is spelled G-a-v-i-n G-e-i-s, and I am the Nebraska state director for Common Cause. We are absolutely in support of LR311CA. Common Cause is an organization focused on the core tenets of American democracy, and as thus-- and as that's our mission, redistricting is in our wheelhouse and has been for decades. We have advocated for a more transparent, a more accountable, a more representative redistricting process for going on at least 30 years now, and have monitored every Nebraskan redistricting cycle as far back as the 1990s. As Senator Cavanaugh pointed out in his opening, the Nebraska redistricting process is far from perfect as most states, and we believe LR311CA is a step in the right direction towards more independence, more transparency, more accountability. Now, we will say that LR311CA could be improved. There are some major improvements that could be done to make it more transparent, more accountable. First of all, remove the Legislature from the process entirely. Give the commission the ability to certify maps to the Secretary of State without the approval or oversight of the Legislature whatsoever. I would go a step further and not allow the Legislature to even select members of the commission. There is a clear conflict of interest when it comes to senators drawing their own voting districts. I think you all can see that. You have all-- many of you have lived through it. There is conflict of interest there when it come to choosing how your-- which voters will be in your district and which will not. You should be removed from the processes. You should not have a stake in it. You should-- you do have a stake in it, and that's wrong. You do have a stake in it. You should be like every other Nebraskan, but you should not have oversight over the final maps. So, that should be removed from this and the, the commission itself should certify maps to the Secretary of State. There would still be judicial review for any problems, any defects in the maps when it comes to representation. That is to say there is oversight, but it should not be this body that oversees the creation of maps. Other things, other improvements that I would recommend is the inclusion of communities of interest as a criteria of the maps. That is a widely-accepted criteria at, at-- in the state level, at the federal level. It's basically a criteria to ensure that communities that may not align with a neighborhood line or a county line or a city line are kept together. We can think of

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this as often bigger cities where there are disparate groups of individuals that would be-- consider themselves a community. This is data we should take into account when we draw district maps. It's something we should look at; not simply look at neighborhood lines and city lines, but how people align themselves within communities. We should keep communities together when we're drawing legislative and all of the districts we draw. Other things that we could do to strengthen this would just be improve the transparency here. Right now, Nebraska only requires hearings, public hearings, after maps are created. We should include-- we should add another set of hearings prior to the creation of maps to take this to communities ahead of the drawing process, to take input ahead of time to ensure that as we're creating those maps we already know what communities want from us, rather than looking at the back end and bringing the already-baked product to the people that is then, right, difficult to change at that point. So, we should increase the number of hearings we're having. We should improve the amount of transparency in this. The Legislature now publishes all of their hearings online in a digital video format; that could be done for the commission, that could be done for anybody drawing these maps. That should be baked into this. And I would-- the last thing I'll say is we should be doing a clear analysis, a partisan analysis of these maps prior to finalizing them. We should looking-- that's not data should be using on the front end, but when we have a nearly-final set of maps, before we finalize it, we should be looking at partisan data to ensure that the outcome isn't a partisan one, even if that wasn't intended from the beginning. We should be looking at factors before my maps are finalized to ensure they are representative, that they're not partisan, and that they are transparent and accountable to Nebraskans at large. So, that is all just to say we support LR311CA. It is a step in the right direction, but there are absolutely things we can do to make this stronger, make this more transparent, make this more accountable, and make it less beholden to the interests of elected officials. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank-- ope. Senator Ballard.

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**BALLARD:** [INAUDIBLE] We're running up on time. But I, I-- it's-- I appreciate you being here. Is there any concern that these commissioners would have no connection to Nebraskans at large? Like, we have responsibility to 40,000 constituents. But these commissioners, they're appointed, possibly selected. Is there any concern about that?

**GAVIN GEIS:** I, I think that you would be selecting members from the committee-- from the community, right? I think all Nebraskans have a stake in this, right? Yes, certainly, you're elected to represent. But I don't think that simply because these are unelected individuals doesn't mean they don't care about their communities, they don't care about Nebraska. And they would be self, self, self-appointed, right? They'd be putting their hand in the ring to say that I wanted to take this on. It wouldn't be-- some states do a random drawing of a hat and you end up in these. I don't know if that's the best model. But I do think people who step forward and say "I want to take part in this"-- they have a stake in this. We all have a stake in this.

**BALLARD:** OK, and then how do you get rid of political-- we all have political bias. You-- to be honest with you. How do you get rid of that?

**GAVIN GEIS:** You're, you're right. You can't get rid of it entirely. But you can change whether or not someone will be running for election in the district they're drawing, right? That's really what it comes down-- it's a level of-- it's a level of bias. It's not-- we can't eliminate it all. We're not going to have computers draw these maps. I don't think that's even the best policy to have computers draw these maps, because we need to know what the communities look like, and we need to know what's happening and what people want. But-- so, like you said, you can't rid of bias. But you can limit it, and you can limit the scope of how much, how much these maps matter to the individual and their re-election.

**BALLARD:** All right. Thank you.

**GAVIN GEIS:** Absolutely.

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**HANSEN:** We have no bias here because we're a non-partisan Unicameral.

**GAVIN GEIS:** I, I choose to believe you today.

**HANSEN:** Yes, so you should let us do it. No, I'm just joking. All right, any questions from the committee? All right. Seeing none. Thank you for coming.

**GAVIN GEIS:** Thank you.

**HANSEN:** Appreciate it. Anybody else wishing to testify in support of LR311CA? Seeing none. Anybody wish to testify in opposition to LR311CA. Seeing none. Anybody wish to testify in the neutral capacity? All right. Seeing none. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're welcome back up. And for the record, we did have 30 proponents, 60 opponents, and 0 in the neutral capacity.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** No neutrality on this.

**HANSEN:** Yep. It's all partisan.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** Thank you, Chairman. This was a-- it was a great hearing. Good-- I appreciate Ms. St. Clair and Mr. Geis being here. I know we're up against the end here, but I would just say I, I, I appreciate all of Mr. Geis' constructive criticisms. I think that those-- a lot of those things are probably workable into the amendment as-is, and would still follow the spirit, and, and he's right. And to Senator Ballard's question, there's no perfect system. Whenever we have to have people involved, there is going to be some sort of bias. This is an attempt-- and if you look at it, it's a four-page, five-page constitutional amendment. It has a lot in it for a constitutional amendment, and it's because we're trying to solve all these problems of saying you can't be involved five years before, you can be involved five years after, you have to have, you know, at least three of the biggest party, three of the next party, three of no party; you have to have-- any vote has to be from a, a cross-section of those folks, trying to take as much out of it where it has to just be a genuine, across-the-board compromise. It's not unusual to have boards and commissions that have this sort of requirement that no, no one party completely dominate. We've

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done it on the Liquor Control Commission, we've done on the Judicial Nominating Commission, we do it for a lot of very important things that we do in the state to try to get at least some balance. You can't get rid of the bias, but we can get a balance of perspectives. And to Mr. Geis' point, the most important goal that this is attempting to achieve is taking it out of the hands of the people who are running for those seats. So, if there's another path to do that, I'm certainly open to it. But I think just having people who-- I mean, elected officials choosing their voters, I think that's a real problem, and it, it has a problem with the confidence people have in us. So, that's why I brought this forward. I appreciate the comments, and I'm happy to answer any last questions.

**HANSEN:** Any questions from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you.

**J. CAVANAUGH:** All right. Thank you.

**HANSEN:** All right. That will conclude our hearing for LR311CA and our hearings for today. And I would--