

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Floor Debate February 2, 2026
Rough Draft

KELLY: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the eighteenth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, Second Session. Our chaplain for today, Pastor Michael Eckelkamp, Christ Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska, a guest of Senator Jacobson. Please rise.

MICHAEL ECKELKAMP: Gracious God, we gather in your presence, acknowledging that all wisdom and authority come from you. We thank you for the privilege of serving the people of Nebraska, and we ask that your spirit would rest and guide every decision made in this Chamber. Grant these leaders discernment rooted in truth, compassion shaped by the example of Christ, the courage to pursue what is just and honorable. Where there's disagreement, bring unity. Where there is confusion, bring clarity. Where there's fatigue, bring renewed strength. May the work done here today reflect your love for all people and contribute to the flourishing of our state. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

KELLY: I recognize Senator Bosn for the Pledge of Allegiance.

BOSN: Good morning, colleagues. Please join me for the Pledge. I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

KELLY: I call to, to order the eighteenth day of the One Hundred Ninth Legislature, Second Session. Senators, please record your presence. Roll call. Mr. Clerk, please record.

CLERK: There's a quorum present, Mr. President.

KELLY: Are there any corrections for the Journal?

CLERK: I have no corrections this morning, sir.

KELLY: Any messages, reports, or announcements?

CLERK: There are, Mr. President. A reference report from the Referencing Committee concerning the reference of LR329, as well as 3 gubernatorial appointments. Your Committee on Natural Resources, chaired by Senator Ballard [SIC, reports LB743, LB822, LB824 to General File. Additionally, your Committee on Judiciary, chaired by Senator Bosn, reports LB816 to General File, with committee

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amendments. And your Committee on Revenue, chaired by Senator von Gillern reports LB900 to General File. That's all I have at this time.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. While the Legislature is in session and capable of transacting business, I propose to sign and do hereby sign LR318, LR319, LR320, LR321, LR322, LR323, LR324, LR325, LR326, and LR327. Mr. Clerk, please proceed to the first items on the agenda.

CLERK: Mr. President, first item on the agenda, committee report from the Natural Resources Committee, reporting favorably on the gubernatorial appointments of Jamie Bearup, Scott McPheeters, and Taylor Nelson to the Nebraska Ethanol Board.

KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Could I have a gavel, please? Today, confirmation of Jamie Bearup, Scott McPheeters, and Taylor Nelson to the Nebraska Ethanol Board. Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, I am offering these three gentlemen up for your consideration for a term from September 24, 2025 to August 31 of 2026. The Nebraska Ethanol Board was established in 1971. The board promotes, develops, and markets Nebraska's ethanol industry. It supports 24-plus ethanol plants, making Nebraska a top-two producer by fostering industry growth, advocating for favorable policies, research, and expanding market access for biofields. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 28, 2026, where all three of these very knowledgeable and gifted gentlemen appeared in person and answered the committee's questions. There was no testimony, either online or in person, in opposition to the appointments of Mr. Bearup, Mr. McPheeters, or Mr. Nelson. Mr. Bearup lives in Lincoln, is employed as a welder with Tuttle Inc. and Local 464 Steamfitters and Plumbers, and is the business representative organizer. He is a new appointee, being appointed to the board to represent labor. Mr. Scott McPheeters lives in Gothenburg, Nebraska, is an ag producer, a registered Independent, and is being reappointed to his third term on the Ethanol Board. Mr. Taylor Nelson lives in South Sioux City, Nebraska, is a corn grower, and is being reappointed to his 3rd term to represent the corn-growing industry. The Natural Resources Committee advanced the nominations unanimously on an 8-0 vote. I ask for your green vote for the confirmation of Mr. Jamie Bearup, Mr. Scott McPheeters, and Mr. Taylor Nelson to the Nebraska Ethanol Board. Thank you, Mr. President.

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KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. The question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 41 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: Committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Natural Resources Committee would report favorably on the appointment of Douglas Zingula to the Game and Parks Commission.

KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, today I offer for your consideration the nomination of Mr. Douglas Zingula for appointment to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, for a term from January 17, 2026, to January 16, 2030. The Game and Park Commission consists of nine members, one from each of the eight districts provided by statute and one at-large member appointed by the Governor, with consent of this body. To be a member of the commission, an individual must be a legal resident and citizen of Nebraska and shall be well-informed and interested in the matters under the jurisdiction of the commission. At least three members of the commission shall be actually engaged in agricultural pursuits. No more than five of the members can be affiliated with the same political party. Mr. Zingula is from Crawford, Nebraska, is a Republican, and would represent District 7, which consists of Deuel, Garden, Keith, Sheridan, Cheyenne, Morrill, Box Butte, Dawes, Sioux, Scotts Bluff, Banner, and Kimball Counties. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 21, 2026, where Mr. Zingula appeared in person and answered the committee's questions. The committee found Mr. Zingula to be quite knowledgeable and engaged in the matters concerning Nebraska's great outdoors, parks, and other natural resources. The Natural Resources Committee advanced Mr. Zingula unanimously, on an 8-0 vote. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Senators, the question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

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CLERK: 42 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: Committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Natural Resources Committee would report favorably on the gubernatorial appointment of Steve Mattoon to the Nebraska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, today I offer for your consideration the nomination of Mr. Steve Mattoon for appointment to the Nebraska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission, for a term from September 29, 2025 to September 28, 2029. The Oil and Gas Conservation Commission consists of three members appointed by the Governor, with the approval of this body. At least one member of the commission must have had experience in the production of oil and gas and shall have resided in the state for at least one year. Each of the other members shall have resided in the state in for three years. Members serve four-year terms. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 22, 2026, where Mr. Mattoon appeared in person and answered the committee's questions. Mr. Mattoon is from Sidney, Nebraska, where he grew up. He is an attorney who previously represented oil and gas clients before the commission, and he himself has rendered drilling title opinions in over 30 counties and is the committee member with oil and production experience. The committee found Mr. Mattoon to be extremely knowledgeable and qualified. There was no testimony, either online or in person, in opposition to Mr. Mattoon's appointment. The Natural Resources Committee advanced Mr. Mattoon unanimously, on an 8-0 vote. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. The question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 41 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Natural Resources Committee would report favorably on the gubernator-- gubernatorial appointment of Garfield Coleman to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board.

KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, today I offer for your consideration the nomination of Mr. Garfield Coleman for appointment to the Nebraska Environmental Trust Board, for a term from June 9, 2025, to March 10, 2031, to January 16 of 2030. The Environmental Trust Board consists of the Director of Water, Energy, and Environment, the Chief Water Officer, the Director of Agriculture, the Secretary of the Game and Parks Commissions, the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health and Human Services, or his or her designee, and nine citizens appointed by the Governor, with the approval of this body. The citizen members represent the general public and shall have demonstrated competence, experience, and interest in the environment or-- of the state. Two of the citizen members shall also have experience with private financing of public purpose projects. Three appointees are chosen from each of the three congressional districts. Mr. Coleman is from Omaha, Nebraska. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 21, 2026, where Mr. Coleman appeared in person and answered the committee's questions. The committee found Mr. Coleman to be quite knowledgeable and engaged in the matters concerning Nebraska's Environmental Trust. There was no testimony either online or in person in opposition to Mr. Coleman's appointment. The Natural Resources Committee advanced Mr. Coleman on a 7-0-1 vote. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Happy Groundhog Day. So in honor of Groundhog day, obviously, I always like to talk a little bit about that. But it does-- you know, the movie starring Bill Murray is about the fact that the same things keep coming up over and over again. He lives the same day over and over again. And often, this place feels that way. And so, I punched in talking about the Environmental Trust. I spent four years serving on the Natural Resources Committee, talking a lot about the Environmental Trust. When I first got here, there was a controversy with the trust, where they had allocated money through their granting authority, to a project that was not an eligible project, and ended up-- they ended up

withdrawing that grant after a lawsuit. But since then, we've seen a further abuse of that public trust that the, that the trust is supposed to engage in, and we've seen the Governor come and take money from the Environmental Trust to use for General Fund obligations. And so, I think we need to be very vigilant about the Environmental Trust and who we're placing on there, to make sure-- the Environmental Trust was created by the voters in, I think it was 1992, when they voted to create the lottery, being Keno and, and things like-- what's it called-- Powerball, and things like that. And half, or about 44% of that money goes into-- specifically to be used for environmental remediation, restoring habitat, and projects to improve the environment of the state of Nebraska. And for those intervening, about 30 years, they did that. And there's a lot of great projects. I'm sure you've all seen the lists of projects that are-- have been done in your district that have really enhanced the experience of Nebraskans, and that's what the trust is supposed to do. And now, we're seeing a continued assault on that task of the Environmental Trust by the Governor to fill budget holes in the state. So I-- this is going to come up during the budget again. We've-- come up during the budget, previously. I will continue to oppose that. But at this point, I, I don't know enough about this individual. They are a new appointee. So obviously, they don't have the record of the prior bad acts, so I'm not going to oppose them for those purposes, but just wanted to make sure everybody-- we didn't let this opportunity go by to talk about how important the Environmental Trust is and how we must protect its objectives. So-- oh, and I, I don't know yet what happened in Unadilla, which is where the Nebraska ground hog is. Perhaps the Senator from Unadilla could tell us what happened in Unadilla. But Punxsutawney Phil, the, the one in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, did see his shadow, predicting six more weeks of winter. So, I know you guys were all waiting to find out what happened in Punxsutawney today. But Senator Slama would always correct me, and point out that we have our own ground hog in Nebraska, so perhaps the Senator from that district could, could inform us. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I would just want to echo some of the comments made by my friend, Senator Brandt and Senator John Cavanaugh. In evaluating the qualifications and commitment for this nominee at the committee level, I want to just be clear about my present, not voting vote. I rarely PNV. I think there are times and places to do that, but I also feel like our

constituents selected us to come down here and vote. In this specific instance, I want to be clear about why I utilized that option. I think that this was a very impressive nominee with a considerable record of service to our country, to his community, and to our state. I think he is passionate and knowledgeable about the task before him, in regards to serving to assist and help lead the Environmental Trust. As I understand it, I believe he was perhaps an interim appointee and has been working with the trust at least for maybe the past couple months, maybe up to a year, essentially. I don't remember exactly off the top of my head-- and he chairs the grant committee presently. So in no way is my present, not voting vote indicative of my feelings about his qualifications. He's well-qualified. However, I think it's important to note, and I've asked each member who has come before the committee in regards to an appointment for the Nebraska Environmental Trust, what they're doing to right the ship to fight back against what I believe to be unlawful and unnecessary sweeps of this money to fill budgetary holes that were created by the Governor and the majority of this Legislature when they decided to rush through inequitable, unsustainable, and unaffordable Kansas-style tax cuts to benefit the wealthiest Nebraskans and largest corporations. That, in addition to a host of other factors, but that being a primary driver, has worked exactly as predicted. It blew a hole in the budget. And we have seen this administration squander a historic budget surplus and plunge us into a present and ever-growing structural budget deficit. And now, pressure is on the Environmental Trust and its leadership to acquiesce to budgetary sweeps, which I believe definitely raise important questions about whether or not we're being good stewards of the will of the voters. The Environmental Trust was created not through this Legislature, but through a ballot initiative that carefully delineated how we would utilize gaming revenues for specific purposes. And that system has worked relatively well for decades. And now, we see a rush on the trust. We've seen litigation, we've seen sweeps, we've seen incredible advocacy and organizing in communities across the state. And I just want to note a couple of additional points. Senator Brandt and others have introduced a constitutional amendment this session, to bring additional illumination to what's happening in regards to the trust. I think, perhaps, we're clear-eyed about what the fate of that legislation may be, but I do commend him for providing a public forum to have that conversation. And perhaps it will pass. You never know what can happen when the Legislature is in session. But what a sad state of affairs that we have to introduce another constitutional amendment to support what the voters have already approved. And this is what's so dangerous about this Legislature substituting its will

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for the voters, because we see it in minimum wage, we see it in sick leave, we see it in vouchers, and now we're seeing it in regards to environmental protection issues, which, again, have an existing framework that has served our state well. I'm going to punch in again, because I'm just about out of time. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senator John Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Well, it's Groundhog Day again. And I was remiss in my last comments that I didn't actually ask the Senator representing Unadilla to yield to a question. So would Senator Hallstrom yield to a question?

KELLY: Senator Hallstrom, would you yield to a question?

HALLSTROM: Certainly.

J. CAVANAUGH: Senator, are, are you aware that today is Groundhog Day?

HALLSTROM: I believe, over and over and over again, I'm aware of that.

J. CAVANAUGH: And you represent the village of Unadilla?

HALLSTROM: I represent the First Legislative District of which Unadilla is a community contained therein.

J. CAVANAUGH: Could you tell me what-- U-- whether Unadilla Billie saw her shadow today or not?

HALLSTROM: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: And did she? Answered like a real lawyer.

HALLSTROM: I am, I am, I am pleased to announce that Unadilla Billie, who replaced Unadilla Bill a number of years ago, has conflicted with Punxsutawney Phil. Punxsutawney Phil suggested that we'd have six more weeks of winter, and "Unadilly" Billie proudly proclaimed today that we will have an early spring. And if I may, I'll just give a, a quick recap. Unadilla is the Groundhog Capital of the state of Nebraska, having been proclaimed as such in the Kay Orr administration. Governor Orr was gone one day and Lieutenant Governor Bill Nichol proudly proclaimed Unadilla upon request to be the Groundhog Capital of the state of Nebraska, and it has continued as such since that time. The festivities are this weekend, so please feel free to come down to

Unadilla. They've got an amazing parade led by the Falcon that's owned by Bob Brandt, who's kind of the, the leader, taking over for his father, Bill Brandt, a number of years ago. And the parade will do wonders for your cardio, as it's about one, maybe two blocks long.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Senator Hallstrom. Well, colleagues, I, I love to hear that. And I would, I would just add-- I appreciate the history from Senator Hallstrom-- that local journalists have done a analysis of the predictions of Unadilla Billie, and you'll be happy to know that Unadilla Billie has been correct in all of her predictions since she took over from Unadilla Bill, a few years back. So, hopefully, again, it will be an early spring. So I-- obviously, it's fun to talk about things like-- something a little bit silly like this. But I do, as talked about before-- the feeling of the repetitive nature of having these conversations, and I would just, again, echo Senator Conrad's comments, about how we are back in the same place, where we are talking about the will of the people being undermined by this attempt to take money out of the Environmental Trust to fill budget holes when the Governor, in his State of the State, did say that we don't have a budget shortfall, so I don't know why we would be taking money away from the voter-approved desired intention for the Environmental Trust to put into environmental activities. But-- so I, I won't belabor the point here. I-- it does sound like this nominee is very qualified for the Environmental Trust. And as I said, I don't think he was involved in the previous things that have happened in the Environmental Trust that I have such a problem with, but I will continue to defend the Environmental Trust's stated goals/job that has-- was put-- empowered by the voters when they passed the creation of the Environmental Trust and the creation of the State Lottery Act. And so, I'll, I'll plan to vote for this nominee. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh, Senator Hallstrom, you're recognized to speak.

HALLSTROM: In commemoration of Groundhog Day, I'm going to go through the history of Groundhog Day and the Unadilla, Nebraska, being designated as the state capital-- or the Capital of the state of Nebraska. Just kidding. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hallstrom. Senator Conrad, you're recognized to speak.

CONRAD: Thank you, Mr. President. Again, good morning, colleagues. I wanted to just also note for the record that under provisions that are recognized in our rules, myself, Senator Raybould, Senator Juarez, have asked our chairman on the Natural Resources Committee, Chairman Brandt, to consider holding a separate and complementary budgetary hearing that would allow the committee of subject matter jurisdiction a deeper opportunity to understand the both policy changes and dollars and cents that are part and parcel with the Governor's budgetary proposal, and that would help to ensure more members are up to speed on that issue when it hits the floor after it emanates from the Appropriations Committee. Perhaps we can achieve some of those same goals through the separate CA public hearing and, of course, the public has been weighing in, and I appreciate them doing so separately to each of us, as representatives. But concern about fidelity to the will of the voters in regards to the Environmental Trust and its purposes and uses and present posture is not political. It has benefited communities in urban Nebraska. It has benefitted communities in suburban Nebraska. It has benefited rural Nebraska. And the current approach that this administration has taken to be so flippant towards the will of the voters and the fidelity of the trust and its important mission is unconscionable and deserves more illumination and attention. I am hopeful that either through the existing budgetary hearings at the appropriations level, perhaps the chair will act on our request to have a separate complementary hearing before the subject matter committee of jurisdiction, in order to meet the extraordinary nature of the present threats, in regards to what's happening with the Environmental Trust-- the sweeps, the diversion, the move over to administrative salaries and general operations for the newly-merged Department of Energy and national-- Natural Resources, et cetera. All of these moving parts are out of the ordinary, do not honor the spirit and intent of what the will of the voters ordained by the establishment of the Environmental Trust, and it's been a slippery slope for far too long. We need extraordinary measures to put together a broad coalition, externally and in this body, to protect the Environmental Trust, to ensure that this sweep, this attack, this raid, stops, to make sure that those dollars go out to the communities as they were intended and as they have done. And that's going to take leadership, from nominees like this and other members of the Environmental Trust, to look carefully at what the voters ordained, to ensure that they do not blindly follow a Governor's reckless proposals as contained in his budgetary recommendation to this Legislature and corresponding bills that are coming before subject matter jurisdictional committees. So this is an

important issue, perhaps now more than ever, that we're going to need additional time and attention to work together on. And this is why it's so very important, even when we disagree, colleagues, with perhaps the outcome of what the voters may say, that this Legislature does not act callously and flippantly towards that expression. It is not a poll. It is not a suggestion. It is not an advisory opinion. When the public votes on ballot initiatives, constitutional amendments, and referendum, it has co-equal authority with the Legislature, and it should be treated with respect, not with a shrug. And this is a prime example of how dangerous it is for this Legislature to start picking and choosing what aspects of the will of the voters we'll choose to respect and which we will substitute our own judgment for, in the face of radical proposals by the Pilleen administration that seeks to undermine the will the voters and environmental protections and projects in Nebraska. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Conrad. Senators Clouse and Fred Meyer would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony, they're ninth to tenth to twelfth graders from Buffalo County Youth Advisory Board in Kearney. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Continuing in the queue, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, you're recognized to speak.

M. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I appreciate the conversation this morning about the Environmental Trust. But before I talk about that a little bit further, I did also want to acknowledge that it's Groundhog Day. And I did send a message to our former colleague, Senator Slama, about the shoutout from Senator Cavanaugh, and she informed me that it's the best parade. And I have so many followup questions. Why is there a parade in February in Nebraska? And how can that possibly be the best parade?, Because it feels like it would be very, very unpleasant. I also wanted to acknowledge that because it's Groundhog Day, I'm really thrilled to see that "Ned Ryerson" is out in the lobby, from, from the movie, Groundhogs Day. He's making his annual appearance for all of us-- a former senator that resembles Ned Ryerson. I'm getting a, a puzzled look from Senator DeBoer. But to the, the, the trust fund. This is to echo the com-- the comments made by Senator Conrad. The Environmental Trust Fund is-- needs to be protected. And it is being misused and abused in policy, in the administration, and it-- I think, also, by us, as legislators. And there are other funds, as well. The, the BELF Fund, the Building Education Land Fund, I have concerns about that, the 911 Fund, the Unemployment Fund, and on and on and on. I think we

need to have a real, comprehensive look at, at what the priorities are and what the reasonings behind these funds are. I had a conversation last week with somebody who is in the philanthropic world-- not a local person-- talking about how they are hesitant to get involved in public-private partnerships with states like Nebraska, because we continue to take money that is used-- supposed to be for a specific end-- purpose, and then we just take it and use it for general funds. And I'm concerned about our budget doing just that, and the effectiveness moving forward of public-private partnerships in the state of Nebraska. I know that we have enjoyed a long, storied history of public-private partnerships in this state. They've done some great things for communities across the state. But if we continue to take money out of funds that were created for specific purposes, whether they were with philanthropic dollars or whether they were with fees or taxes, we are showing people that we are not a good partner, and that we will not be a good steward, and we will not be keeping our word. And I think that's something that we all should be very concerned about. I know that the preliminary budget is coming out today. And I look forward to conversations with all of my colleagues, and really, all of Nebraska, about what is in the preliminary budget. And we are having a briefing tomorrow morning. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Brandt, you're recognized, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. Ple-- all those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 34 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Natural Resources Committee would report favorably on the appointment of Scott Dicke to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission.

KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, today I offer for your consideration the nomination of Mr. Scott Dickey to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, for a term from July 23, 2025 to May 31, 2028. The Nebraska Natural Resources Commission, NRC, acts as the

state's primary body for directing, funding, and overseeing soil and water conservation projects, administering seven key state aid funds, including the Water Sustainability Fund. The commission works with the Department of Natural Resources, DNR, which is now DWEE, to manage NRD boundaries, approve cost-share contributions, and guide state water resource policies. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 29, 2026, where Mr. Dicke appeared in person and answered the committee's question. The committee found him to be well-qualified and excited about serving. Mr. Dicke lives in Alma, Nebraska, works as a water resources professional manager, and has very extensive experience in environmental regulatory experience, surface water, and groundwater issues. Mr. Dicke is being appointed to the commission to represent the position of surface water irrigators. There was no testimony, either online or in person, in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Dicke. The Natural Resources Committee advanced the nomination unanimously, on an 8-0 vote. I ask for your green vote for the confirmation of Mr Scott Dicke to the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Senator Clouse, you're recognized to speak.

CLOUSE: Yes. Thank you, Mr. President. I would ask for your green vote, as well. Mr. Dicke is well-qualified to serve on this commission. This is a commission that I served on for a number of years, and it's a very important commission, as it studies our water and flood control and all those types of things across our state. And he-- Mr Dicke has a wealth of experience, and I would just encourage your green votes for this appointment. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Clouse. Seeing no one else in the queue, Senator Brandt, you're recognized, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 37 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Natural Resources Committee would report favorably on the gubernatorial appointment of Scott Cassels to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

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KELLY: Senator Brandt, you're recognized to open.

BRANDT: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues again. On behalf of the Natural Resources Committee, today I offer for your consideration the nomination of Mr. Scott Cassels to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, for a term from January 16, 2026, to January 15, 2030. The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission was established in 1901, and is responsible for stewardship of the state's fish, wildlife, park, and outdoor recreation resources. It manages state parks, sets hunting and fishing regulations, enforces laws through conservation officers, and conducts wildlife research to conserve habitat. The Natural Resources Committee had a public hearing on January 29, 2026, where Mr. Cassels appeared in person and answered the committee's questions. The committee found him to be well-qualified and excited about serving. Mr. Cassels lives in Omaha, Nebraska, is a retired construction executive, and is being appointed as an at-large member of the commission. There was no testimony, either online or in person, in opposition to the appointment of Mr. Dicke-- of Mr Cassels. The Natural Resources Committee advanced the nomination unanimously, on an 8-0 vote. I ask for your green vote for the confirmation of Mr. Scott Cassels to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the committee report from Natural Resources. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 39 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee would report favorably on the gubernatorial appointment of J.L. Spray to the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission.

KELLY: Senator Sanders, you're recognized to open.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President. On January 23, the Government Committee held our public hearing on the appointment of J.L. Spray to the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission. Mr. Spray is a partner at the Matson Ricketts Law Firm here, in Lincoln. Mr. Spray also has an extensive experience in public service. He served on the Commission on Industrial Relations, the Nebraska Equal Opportunity

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Commission, and the Supreme Court Ethics Advisory Committee. He also previously served two terms on the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Committee. Our committee voted unanimously on January 29th to recommend Mr. Spray's confirmation. Please vote green to confirm Mr. Spray's appointment to the NADC. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the committee report from the Military, Military Affairs Committee [SIC]. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 41 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee would report favorably on the appointment of Douglas Hohbein to-- as the State Fire Marshal.

KELLY: Senator Sanders, you're recognized to open.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. President. On January 23, the Government Committee held our public hearing on the appointment of Douglas Hohbein for the position of State Fire Marshal. Mr. Hohbein is a career public servant, with over 40 years of experience in the Nebraska Fire Service and public safety. He started his career with the State Fire Marshall's Office as an inspector in Holdridge, Nebraska, in 1985. He transferred to the Plains Division in 1988, eventually being chief of that division in 1994. He remained in that sole position until 2018 when he accepted a promotion to assist-- Assistant State Fire Marshal. Since that time, he has served on three different occasions as the Interim State Fire Marshal, and now he has been appointed to lead the agency where he has spent his entire career. Our committee voted unanimously on January 29th to recommend Mr. Hohbein's confirmation. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Seeing no one else in the queue, you're recognized to close, and waive closing. Members, the question is the adoption of the report from the Committee on Government Affairs-- Government and Military Affairs. All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

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CLERK: 38 ayes, 0 nays on adoption of the committee report, Mr. President.

KELLY: The committee report is adopted. Mr. Clerk, for items.

CLERK: Thank you, Mr. President. Notice of committee hearings from the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. Additionally, amendments to be printed from Senator McKinney to LB742, Senator Hughes to LB1038. New LRs, LR336 and LB337 from Senator Spivey. Those will both be laid over. That's all I have at this time.

KELLY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Speaker Arch, you are recognized for an announcement.

ARCH: Thank you, Mr. President. I want to give you a little bit of a, a heads up on what's coming this week and so you can prepare yourselves. Starting-- tomorrow, Senator Clements has, has indicated that he wants to do this budget briefing at 9 a.m. tomorrow morning, and so we are going to start here at 10 a.m. and-- to, to accommodate that. Also, I wanted to let you know that on Thursday, I intend to schedule Select and Final. And, and this will be our first round of Final and, and, and Select. I, I just want to mention that, because I know some of you have mentioned to me that you've got some amendments that you're working on, and you want to get those done. So be sure and get those done by Wednesday, so that those can get filed, so that you can, you can use that on, on Thursday. And if you have any, if you have any issues with that, I know that Laurie from my office is going to be contacting your offices just to make sure we know the status of your bills on, on Select File. So Thursday, there will be Select and Final, our first round of that, and I did want to give you a heads up on that. I think that's it. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Speaker Arch. Mr. Clerk. Senator Clements, for an announcement.

CLEMENTS: Thank you Mr. President. As Speaker Arch mentioned, I'll be doing a briefing on the preliminary budget report and the booklet will be circulated-- be handing out now. The Appropriations Committee has spent the first weeks of the session here, going through agency requests and the Governor's recommendations. What we have adopted so far is in this booklet, and there will be more in the final budget later. But tomorrow morning, at 9 a.m. at room 1525, we'll be doing a briefing on the booklet. And also, the report will be put on the website under budget reports, around noon today. You can get an

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electronic copy there, as well. So I welcome you to come to room 1525, 9 a.m., Tuesday morning. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Clements. Mr. Clerk, next item on the agenda.

CLERK: Mr. President, General File, LB669, introduced, introduced by Senator Storer. It's a bill for an act relating to abortion. It restates legislative intent; eliminates defined terms; changes requirements for voluntary and informed consent; changes requirements relating to civil actions; harmonize provisions; repeals the original section. The bill was read for the first time on January 22, 2025 and referred to the Judiciary Committee. That committee placed the bill on General File. When the Legislature left, Mr. Pres-- President, pending was the bill itself, as well as an indefinitely postpone motion from Senator Hunt.

KELLY: Senator Storer, you're recognized for a refresh, 2 minutes on the bill.

STORER: Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning. I hope everybody had a wonderful weekend, and I'm pleased to hear that-- is it Bill, or Bob, or I don't remember the, the new name for the groundhog that tells us we're going to have an early spring. I hope that's right. So I'm just going to bring you up to date. As we left this on Friday, Senator Hunt had expressed some concerns about the fact-- one of the primary things was that the language in LB669 was only requiring the screening to be done for women when they went into an abortion and not for women when they went in for a first obstetric appointment. And I think that's-- was a fair concern. The intent, the, the real goal with this is we are-- we acknowledge that domestic violence is on the rise, we acknowledge that sex trafficking is a real issue here in Nebraska, and we acknowledge that coercion can be used over women in those situations. And so it is only-- it only makes sense. As we look at a lot of the other domestic violence bills that have been introduced this year, that this is a juncture that we can help screen for and identify women who are being pressured or coerced or trafficked or are in a domestic violence situation and help them get out. And so we have-- I filed an amendment that should be up for you to read that now includes-- and if you, if you want to, it's page 9 of the bill, I believe-- page 8 in the amendment, that adds the provision that women--

KELLY: That's--

STORER: --if she is being or has been pressured or coerced to become pregnant, will also [INAUDIBLE].

KELLY: That's, that's time, Senator, on the refresh. Thank you.

STORER: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Senator Hunt, you're recognized for a one-minute refresh on the priority motion.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues, I initially filed this IPP motion and wanted to take some time on Friday to give Senator Soor some time to continue working with stakeholders to craft this amendment that she's introduced, AM1924. I just received it, you know, this morning and got the opportunity to look over it. And I'm still waiting for some feedback from the Hospital Administration, because one thing that this amendment does is it puts obstetricians into abortion statutes for the first time. And so, that's something that could open them up to some different liability, it's a scope of practice change, and so I'm waiting to hear some feedback about that. And it also still doesn't address that the number one pressure that women face is to keep a pregnancy that they do not want to keep. And so, I think that, you know, I'm looking forward to the discussion that we're about to have and see if we can get this bill to a place that's satisfactory to everybody, and let the process play out. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Senator Storm would like to recognize a guest under the south balcony, Justin Korth, from Omaha. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Moving to the queue, Senator Bosn, you're recognized to speak.

BOSN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning colleagues, I rise in strong support of LB669 and the amendment that I know Senator Storer is working on with some who had some legitimate concerns. I want to be very clear. We, at the hearing, even had some of those concerns pointed out to us about, OK, are we singling out abortion clinics to provide this notice when, if we really want to target domestic abuse and human trafficking, we would be providing this type of information to-- providing this type of information to victims at all of their appointments. And so, I think Senator Storer comes at this from a genuine place of, of-- that makes sense, let's try and accommodate everything. I will note, from the hearing-- and I will read a little bit about the statement that was presented from Adelle Burk, on behalf

of Planned Parenthood, in opposition. Her letter is dated March 6, 2025, and she notes, coercion related to abortion is a very small piece of the puzzle of a much larger problem of violence against women and intimate partner violence and the impact that it has on their health. Focusing solely on coercive abortion takes away from the very broad problem of domestic violence and reproductive coercion. She goes on to talk about how singling out just abortion clinics when not providing this at all of the other places women go for prenatal care does tend to, in her mind, target that, that population only. And so I think the amendment, if we can get to the amendment, which would be my goal, would really satisfy the concerns of the opponents in this particular legislation. So I am asking that we move things along so we can get to the amendment, and then have a fruitful discussion about what the amendment does or does not do. With that, Mr. President, I would yield the remainder of my time to Senator Storer if she'd like it.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Bosn. Senator Storer, 3 minutes, 5 seconds.

STORER: Thank you, Mr. President. And thank you, Senator Bosn. As, as the Senator just said, the number one concern that was brought to our attention, both in the hearing and from my colleagues here on the floor on Friday, was, again, that this provision for screening did not also apply to women at their obstetric appointment. And so, we, we worked through some of that-- tried to work through some that in, in hearing, and didn't quite get the language the way we thought it would work at that point. In the, in the meantime, I know one of the concerns was, you know, that, that a first obstetric appointment oftentimes could be an emergency, if somebody-- if someone is-- a woman is coming in with an ectopic pregnancy, for example. There are exceptions to informed consent to those emergency appointments in statute. I believe it's 28-327. And so, that really should eliminate that concern. One of the other, one of the other concerns that my colleagues brought to me was that in the original bill that the language of intent was maybe a little, a little heavy-handed and didn't reflect the entirety of the situation. And so, we also, in the amendment, have taken out those references to coercion specifically to abortion, and the, the language of intent reflects any pregnant woman, so certainly a woman that may be going in for an abortion or a woman that may be going in for her first obstetric appointment. So up, up until Friday, these were, these were the primary concerns. This is what we've really worked hard to address, because really, what, what we're trying to do here is save, save lives. And, you know, women, domestic violence, and human trafficking are an issue in not just

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Nebraska, quite frankly, but the nation, but we can do what we can do here, and this is meaningful legislation. This is meaningful to those women that this may be their only chance to get help and to get out of those horrific situations. So I, too, look forward to some good discussion, but certainly would like to get, get through these other motions so we can get to my amendment and, and get LB669 passed. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Storer. Senator Sorrentino, you're recognized to speak.

SORRENTINO: Thank you, Mr. President. I would yield my time to Senator Storer, if she needs it.

KELLY: Senator Storer, 4 minutes, 55 seconds.

STORER: Thank you, again, Mr. President. I just want to share some of the testimony that was given at that hearing for some of the-- the benefit of some of my colleagues, obviously, that, that were unable to hear that. And I'm just going to, I'm just going to read this verbatim. LB669 addresses a very real and urgent problem. A study by the Charlotte Lozier Institute surveyed 1,000 women, and of 226 women who reported having an abortion, only 33% said it was wanted. The other 67% said that their abortions were either coerced, inconsistent with their values or preferences, or unwanted. LB669 ensures that at the very least, women who are in abusive situations are offered a way to safely seek help by requiring screening for coercion, abuse, trafficking-- and trafficking, and ensuring the pregnant woman is given the numbers for the hotlines for domestic violence and human trafficking, and an opportunity to make a confidential phone call. These are simple, commonsense protections that research has shown are seriously lacking. When these safeguards aren't in place, it isn't women that are being helped. It's the traffickers, abusers, and organizations that profit off of these women. A study by the University of Loyola Chicago Law School found that 55% of sex trafficking victims were forced into abortions, with 30% having undergone more than one. One victim from the study explained why her pimp chose to take her to Planned Parenthood, in this case, to get an abortion. The stories go on. But I, I appreciate-- very sincerely appreciate the acknowledgement of the reality that there are also women that can be in a domestic violence situation and their intimate partner may, may use pregnancy as a way to control them, quite frankly. So this is a broad scope of how we want to protect these women, and screen for whether or not they indeed are in a domestic

violent or trafficked situation where they have been coerced to be there. It would be great if, if we all lived in a world where these things didn't exist, where the atrocities of domestic violence and trafficking didn't exist, but that's not the world we live in. And what we have the opportunity to do here, in the Nebraska Legislature, is pass some legislation that provides meaningful, meaningful resources for women. And we can all-- we can continue to debate, you know, the-- tweak a little language here or there, but this is where it makes sense. It just makes sense, I do not view this as a pro-life, pro-choice bill, and I know that some of, of my colleagues that, that maybe, are a little bit worried about that, you know, are uncomfortable potentially, with that. I don't want to put words in anybody's mouth. But this is a meaningful effort to find the right place where there's a juncture of women in crisis and are likely there against their free will. So again, I hope to get through the other amendments and, and find consensus that we can move forward and agree that, that even if it's one woman that we're going to help, her life matters. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Storer. Senator Dungan, you're recognized to speak.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I do rise today wanting to engage a little bit more in this conversation and appreciative of the debate or discussion that's been started by Senator Hunt and Senator Storer. I did not really engage much on this at the end of last week because I was listening to some of the conversation, and the queue filled up relatively quickly of folks who were supportive of LB669. So I was trying to better understand what the intent was behind it and what the, I guess, consequences of passing this legislation could be. So. I know that we've all had a chance to look at the underlying, original bill. I am now having a chance look through this proposed amendment that Senator Storer has worked on this weekend and I'm kind of trying to mull that over, and similar to what Senator Hunt said, listening to some experts and professionals in the medical field to better understand the implications of what some of these modifications may have. So, I'm trying to figure it out, trying to analyze what this looks like, but I do want to kind of just zoom out a little bit and talk about what some of my overarching concerns are with LB669, both in its original form and in the form that I think it tries to take, even with this amendment. Let's start, obviously, by centering what I think everybody in this room agrees, which is that people-- and we've talked about this on other bills-- who are being human trafficked deserve our

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support as a Legislature, and that we need to do everything we can to always make sure that these survivors have the support that they need. And I do think, you know, in my conversations with Senator Storer at the end of last week, briefly, that we all agree on that. And I think she's coming at this from a genuine place and is trying to do her best to maybe support these folks who find themselves in these situations. And she just wrapped up on the mic, saying that, you know, if we can help one person, that is important. And I, I think we all agree we need to do everything we can as a state to help those people. So on that, we can all agree. I think my concerns are that to seek to protect people from human trafficking or domestic violence by sort of working in these additional barriers and hoops and red tape that somebody has to jump through when they're seeking to receive reproductive healthcare or when they are even meeting now with an OB-GYN is maybe not the best way to do that. We talk a lot in this Legislature about the necessity for upstream investment, or at least I do, and I hope my colleagues listen. We do a lot of talk about how if we can increase education, increase our investment in some of these sort of programs, it can always save us money down the road and it can prevent us from having to fix some of these problems later on. This bill, I think, maybe tries to fix a problem after-- sort of downstream, as opposed to upstream. And it does it just in a way that is peculiar. Working in these requirements and adding additional barriers and hoops for medical professionals to jump through seems problematic to achieve some of these goals. I do appreciate that the amendment does change some of the language and the findings. I certainly believe that the findings section in the earlier form of this legislation was a bit one-sided and politicized in nature, but I also think that the new provisions that are added on page 13, as they pertain to the requirements that any person who is going to see a licensed healthcare professional to consult on a pregnancy, on their first visit has to then go through these conversations and hoops, which again, are somewhat politicized. We know. That one of the, if not the most prevalent form of reproductive abuse that happens, or domestic violence that happens around reproductive issues are coerced pregnancies. Are people trying to get, for example, a woman to keep a baby? They know-- abusers know that if they're able to get that person to keep that baby, they stay connected with them. They stay attached both financially, which allows for the cycle of financial abuse to continue. They stay attached legally, through that child, and it gives them an ability to continue to keep tabs on their abuser. I, just as I'm sitting here, have looked through a couple of studies, and one that I found, from 2017, showed that there was a 4% reported coercion

or at least self-reported coercions to, to terminate a pregnancy, but an 8%-- twice as high-- to keep the pregnancy, for men. And so, I think part of my concern, if the language in this section does not seek to address what we know is a prevalent issue, which is that there are people trying to coerce women into not having these abortions so they can stay connected with their abuser, with the person who committed these atrocities against them. And I think that the language that's contained in page 13 is politicized in nature, in that it believes or at least seeks to address only one side of that conversation. So I would just lift that up, as I think it's a conversation worth having. Clearly, the amendment, I think, is indicative that this is not ready for prime time at this juncture. I do still continue to have some objections. But I think we can keep working through it together as a body.

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

DUNGAN: Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator. Senator Storer, you're recognized to speak.

STORER: Thank you, Mr. President. I got to process the, the thought pro-- I got to process Senator Dungan's comment for a minute that, that, that maybe this isn't a good bill because it's trying to solve a problem downstream, rather than upstream. I got to tell you, Senator Dungan, if I'm drowning, I don't care where you're at in the stream, to pull me out. We have had-- we've had some good things that we passed last year, to provide some dollars for survivors of domestic violence. We have a lot of good bills this year that are going to address, address domestic violence. And, and at the end of the day, this is an all-hands-on-deck problem. We want to do preventative work. We want to, we want to make sure that, that abusers that have been-- that are, that are prosecuted fairly. We also want to try and get women out of that situation. I just want to share a little bit of-- a, a little bit of a personal story. My son has worked a lot in the area of human trafficking and has really opened my eyes and helped me understand the problem on a much grander scale, and worked specifically with an organization, and, and their mission was interception. It was the interception model, and it was intercepting women who were being trafficked before they sort of got to their, their trafficked destination, if you will, and they've been very, very successful at that. And I just view this bill as a-- as an example of interception, although she would have already arrived at her destination of a trafficker, unfortunately, so it's not, not true, not

true interception in that sense. But it's, it's interception, in that we're going to try and get her out. Until you've, until you've sort of studied-- and, and trafficking is-- and domestic violence both have somewhat potentially unique aspects to them. But in the world of trafficking, we all have this vision that somebody is, you know, just kidnapped in a white van off the corner. And that happens, by the way. But these are often women who have been groomed for years and, in a way, brainwashed. So upstream, downstream, midstream, I don't care. I don't care where we're at in the stream. We need to be throwing out life jackets to these women at any juncture we possibly can. Again, people, we have the opportunity to do something that is-- and, and I-- we, we agreed that potentially, the language and the intent may have been a little too one-sided, and that's why we've taken that out. We are making a good-faith effort to not make this a political hot potato. We can't deny whether we like to talk about women at their first obstetric appointment or at their first abortion appointment. Well, there would only have one per, per appointment, but whether we like to talk about those specific places or not or we feel uncomfortable with that, the reality is this is, this is a real juncture, where you're going to potentially be able to help women. Doesn't matter how we feel about why-- should they be there, who-- this is a real juncture, where we are going to be able to throw that woman a life jacket and get her out. So again, if I'm struggling to keep my head above water and I'm drowning, I don't care where you're at in the stream. Throw me a life jacket. So let's try and do that with LB669. Thank you.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Storer. Senator Hunt, you're recognized to speak.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. I can tell you a little bit about my, my philosophical mindset with bills like these, and not just relating to healthcare, but lots of topics that we talk about in the Legislature. Last year I joined the Education Committee for the first time, and I was surprised. I don't know why I was so surprised, but I was surprised to realize that a lot of the bills that come through that committee amount to what I call chores for teachers, teacher chores. More compliance, more regulations, more things that we are asking teachers to check off, which requires training, which requires accountability for their schools and school districts. And I really started to feel for these educators who, every single year they start, they got to worry about the problems that they already have teaching their kids, but also being in compliance with whatever new idea the Legislature came up with that they have to follow now. And I have a

similar attitude toward what we do with healthcare providers. I have always said, in Nebraska, we trust our healthcare providers. We have some of the most excellent medical schools in the country here in Nebraska, actually. And, you know, I trust medical consensus. I believe in the standard of care. And when the AMA or the NMA or the APA or someone comes in and talks about what best practices are and tells a bunch of us lawmakers here, who come from such a diverse range of backgrounds, you know, farming, business, banking, some of you have, have been in healthcare, education, stay-at-home parents. We are not really the ones who are equipped with the expertise and experience to be telling doctors how they should take care of their patients, just as I would say we're not the experts to tell educators, you know, what the poster on their wall should say in their classroom, or whatever it is that we deal with in Education. So when we're talking about bills that touch healthcare, that get into these statutes, particularly the abortion statutes, which are, which are a hot potato, you know, you can say that the only focus here is ending human trafficking. Very noble, I agree. But by putting it in these statutes, you are inherently politicizing the topic, knowingly, and, and also walking into a battle on that. So when you bring a bill like that, you better make sure that it's ready for prime time. You better make sure that before it's voted out on the floor, prioritized, that the amendment is ready, that the bill language is ready, that you've done something to work with providers, to work with stakeholders, and make sure that it's not us in the Legislature who frankly, don't know what we're talking about, telling doctors how to do their jobs. Because that's not what I came in here to do. I trust doctors and healthcare providers, and I trust the relationships that they have with their patients to take care of them the best way possible. This is-- you know, it's also worth mentioning, although I don't really have a thought articulated about it, it feels really weird to me in my soul, to be talking about human trafficking, as we are seeing millions and millions of more pages of the Epstein files get released over the weekend, and you know, reading the reports about all the tips to the FBI line about the human trafficking that was happening at the highest echelons of government and industry in our country. And as that continues to get unraveled, hearing the rhetoric, I guess, in, in politics, in rooms where laws are made, like this one, both here and around the whole country, about how we're standing up for women and the juxtaposition of what that actually looks like in practice. Think about the juxtaposition just a few weeks ago when we were in here debating that if someone is trafficked, can she sue the hotel that negligently allowed it to happen? This Legislature said no. Was that

protecting trafficked women? No. So I want to emphasize this. No one is against screening for violence, trafficking, coercion. We all agree that those are serious issues. We all want survivors to be safe, and the disagreement, colleagues, is just about how we do that. Do we do it by tar-- by targeting one politically-charged area of healthcare-- abortion-- and layering on, you know, requirements on healthcare providers that might discourage disclosure? Or do we do it by strengthening the entire safety net for survivors by funding the organizations and systems that keep them safe, that do this work every day, and by trusting medical professionals who provide trauma-informed care already? I think that survivors deserve policies that are built with them, and healthcare providers deserve policies that are build with them, not around them, or behind their back, or trying to shoehorn them--

KELLY: That's your time, Senator.

HUNT: --into something that's not ideal for their situation. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Senator Dungan would like to recognize some guests in the north balcony. They are Nebraska chil-- from Nebraska Children and Family Foundation. Please stand and be recognized by the Nebraska Legislature. Senator Spivey, you're recognized to speak.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, colleagues. Good morning, Nebraskans. I appreciate the dialogue and debate on this, and will actually get back in the queue, so I will be able to add some comments and color to the conversation at hand, and wanted to take a point of personal privilege as, yes, it is Groundhog Day, but it is also Black History Month. And so I appreciate my colleagues that signed on to the Black History Month legislative resolution that I had, as we are celebrating a hundred years of Black History month, nationally. Black History month actually started as a week in 1926, not as a point of celebration, which celebrating is important, but actually as a point of correction. So black contributions were being excluded from American history-- and we know that black history is American history. They are mutually exclusive. And so, we have to understand all parts of our history, because it's in-- integral to ensure that we're not repeating the parts that we're not proud of, and that we have an understanding of the rich fabric that we have across the U.S. and Nebraska. We debated a lot last week on a bill around understanding specific populations and what they're navigating around,

racial slurs and how do we educate our, our students and our teachers to understand that and create welcoming environments, and what does that need to look like. And I think this month is a very accessible way to be intentional about the learning of history for Black Americans, it's accessible, and it shouldn't stop there. We should be learning and understanding all the diversity of our neighbors, of our family members every day. But again, this is an intentional time to really dive in. And I think we have seen in, in what I put in the LR, from enslavement to Jim Crow to mass incarceration, there are important parts of that history, American history, that are continuing to be erased, that we are not talking about, that are being pushed to the margins. And so, this is, again, an opportunity for us to have an intentional touch point around that. I was watching a clip the other day-- actually, I think, yesterday, around Henry Fonda, which a lot of people know him, a famous actor from Omaha, got his start at Omaha Playhouse. And he actually accounted for the lynching of Will Brown. He was 14. And so, I did not find out about the lynching of Will Brown here, in Omaha, Nebraska, until I was 19-- well, 18, on a college visit to Jackson State University. They had a mobile lynching museum that was at the university at the time, in the president's quarters, where I was walking around learning, and stopped in shock as I read this exhibit specifically, about the burning and brutality against Will Brown, who was taken out of the courthouse in Omaha by a mob, shot, and again, lynched, in front of a crowd of hundreds, including children. Henry Fonda's dad had a building that looked over the courthouse and took him there to their office to watch what was happening. And he accounted for this on a-- in an interview, on videotape-- so again, not that long ago, about how, how this experience changed him forever. This experience helped him understand race relations in Nebraska, specifically in Omaha, what he was seeing across the U.S. that seemed a little bit unfamiliar, but was now in his backyard, and what did that mean for him going forward. And so, there is an opportunity as we reflect on these intentional touch points that we can be situated in and really uplift, because it is important. We are still making history. In my LR, I lift up Jewel Rodgers, who is a brilliant poet, who was our first black poet laureate for the state, as well as the youngest. She's only 28. And so when we talk about representation, breaking down and shattering glass ceilings, the contributions of Black Nebraskans and Black Americans are integral to the foundation of America and where we will continue to go. So I hope that my colleagues take this time to reconcile some history, to do some deep-dive learning, and think about how they show

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up for all of our neighbors and communities that may be different than how they identify. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Kauth, you're recognized to speak.

KAUTH: Question.

KELLY: The question's been called. Do I see 5 hands? I do. The question is, shall debate cease? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. There's been a request to place the house under call. The question is, shall the house go under call? All those in favor vote aye; all those opposed vote nay. Record, Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: 21 ayes, 4 nays to place the house under call.

KELLY: The house is under call. Senators, please record your presence. Those unexcused senators outside the Chamber, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. All unauthorized personnel, please leave the floor. The house is under call. Senator Dungan, please return to the Chamber and record your presence. The house is under call. All unexcused members are now present. Members, the question is the motion to indefinitely postpone. A vote was underway. Senator Kauth, will you accept-- there was a request for roll call. Mis-- regular order was-- Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch not voting. Senator Armendariz voting yes. Senator Ballard voting yes. Senator Bosn voting yes. Senator Bostar not voting. Senator Brandt not voting. Senator John Cavanaugh voting no. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh not voting. Senator Clements voting yes. Senator Clouse voting no. Senator Conrad, Senator Conrad voting no. Senator DeBoer not voting. Senator DeKay voting yes. Senator Dorn voting yes. Senator Dover. Senator Dungan voting no. Senator Fredrickson voting no. Senator Guereca voting no. Senator Hallstrom voting yes. Senator Hansen voting yes. Senator Hardin voting yes. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting yes. Senator Hunt voting no. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting yes. Senator Juarez voting no. Senator Kauth voting yes. Senator Lippincott voting yes. Senator Lonowski voting yes. Senator McKinney voting no. Senator Fred Meyer voting yes. Senator Glen Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting yes. Senator Murman voting yes. Senator Prokop not voting. Senator Quick voting no. Senator Raybould. Senator Riepe not voting. Senator Rountree voting no. Senator Sanders voting yes. Senator Sorrentino voting yes. Senator Spivey not voting.

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Senator Storer voting yes. Senator Storm voting yes. Senator Strommen voting yes. Senator von Gillern voting yes. Senator Wordekemper voting yes. Senator Andersen voting yes. Senator Clouse voting yes. Senator Meyer voting yes. The vote is 27 nays, 12 nays to cease debate, Mr. President.

KELLY: The motion is adopted. Senator Hunt, you're recognized to close.

HUNT: Thank you, Mr. President. A lot of freshmen have remarked that they would benefit from some mentorship in this spot. It's something Senator McKeon said. He said maybe he wouldn't have grabbed that lady's butt if he had had some mentorship. And when I started here, there was a lot more of that, I think. And there was a lot of questions about what is it that we're actually voting on, on this board right now, with that motion? So what we just voted on was to cease debate, to, to call the question. And if you voted to call the question, if you voted yes on that, it means that you looked at that board, which, let's see, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, maybe at least 90 minutes of speakers in it. Probably 20 of you in the queue there, who had some thoughts to share about my motion, MO171, to indefinitely postpone LB669. If you wanted to speak on my motion to indefinitely postpone, you could be in the queue and talk to that. Maybe you say, I think we should, I think we shouldn't, I like what Hunt's doing, I think we need more time, whatever your opinion would be. And then we would vote on that motion, and then we would go to the next item on the bill. If you don't want to talk on my motion, you didn't need to be in the queue. You could have waited for the next item to come up on the board, and then you could speak on that. You could wait until LB669 is up there clean, to speak on the bill if you want to. You could wait until AM1924 from Storer was on the board to speak on that, if you want to. But if you look at that board, all of you, and you see 90 minutes of people up there who want to speak, you don't vote to call the question. That's silencing your colleagues, it's uncollegial, it's also nontraditional with the way things go in here, but you might not know that because maybe we don't have enough mentorship. And have I been a good mentor? No. Because I think I would struggle with that. That's not my strong suit anyway. The heart of this bill, from the beginning, to me, has been the premise that women who seek abortion are often tricked, that they don't have their own agency, that they don't know what they're doing, and that they are being coerced into making this decision. LB669 as written forced women to sign a form saying that they haven't been coerced. It put further doubt on medical professionals who are doing their job, and this

reflects a increase in mistrust of medical professionals in this country that I think is a problem. And if we do have the shared goal of helping trafficking survivors, of helping abuse victims, what this bill does, does not get to that enough. And I also don't like it when people stand up and say, if this helps one woman, if this helps one person, then it's worth it. Nobody was saying that on the bill last week or whatever, to say that if a hos-- if a, if a hotel negligently is allowing trafficking to happen, the trafficking victim can sue the hotel. Do you think that would have helped one woman? Do you think one woman could have been helped by that? Probably, but you guys shot that down. So when are we helping women and when are we not? Well, it looks like we're helping them when abortion is on, on the, on the bill, on the conversation. Then it's a yes, it's a rubber stamp, it's a thank you so much, finally, we're standing up and doing something about this problem. Oh, and who cares if 90 minutes of people in the queue are here to speak? Let's move on and vote yes. It's unstatesmanlike. I wonder if you care about that. The heart of this bill is about reproductive coercion. And I think that, you know, being honest, I think Senator Storer's amendment improves the bill. I think that it opens new problems by putting obstetricians into abortion statutes. Obstetricians, the NMA told me that they did not have an opportunity to review this amendment before it was introduced, or that they didn't, at least. And so, there's language in here that's changing the bill significantly that affects healthcare providers and experts in Nebraska in their scope of practice, in their standard of care, in providing what they know to be the best care for their patients. For that reason, I don't think this bill is ready, and I don't think it says anything about you not supporting survivors if you don't support this particular measure, because there will be more to come, and there will be more opportunities to support survivors, because I know that's a goal that we all share. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Hunt. Members, the question is the motion to indefinitely postpone. All those in favor vote aye; all those-- there's been a request for a call of the house. Mis-- roll call vote, rather. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Senator Andersen voting no. Senator Arch voting no. Senator Armendariz voting no. Senator Ballard voting no. Senator Bosn voting no. Senator Bostar not voting. Senator Brandt voting no. Senator John Cavanaugh voting yes. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh not voting. Senator Clements voting no. Senator Clouse voting no. Senator Conrad voting yes. Senator DeBoer not voting. Senator DeKay voting no. Senator Dorn voting no. Senator Dover. Senator Dungan voting yes. Senator

Fredrickson not voting. Senator Guereca voting yes. Senator Hallstrom voting no. Senator Hansen voting no. Senator Hardin voting no. Senator Holdcroft voting no. Senator Hughes voting no. Senator Hunt not voting. Senator Ibach voting no. Senator Jacobson voting no. Senator Juarez voting yes. Senator Kauth voting no. Senator Lippincott voting no. Senator Lonowski voting no. Senator McKinney voting yes. Senator Meyer voting no. Senator Glen Meyer voting no. Senator Moser voting no. Senator Murman voting no. Senator Prokop not voting. Senator Quick not voting. Senator Raybould. Senator Riepe not voting. Senator Rountree voting yes. Senator Sanders voting no. Senator Sorrentino voting no. Senator Spivey not voting. Senator Storer voting no. Senator Storm voting no. Senator Strommen voting no. Senator von Gillern voting no. Senator Wordekemper voting no. Vote is 7 ayes, 31 nays on the motion, Mr. President.

KELLY: The motion is not adopted. I raise the call. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Spivey would move to reconsider the vote just taken on MO171.

KELLY: Senator Spivey, you're recognized to open.

SPIVEY: Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Again, good morning, colleagues. I'm glad I have this opportunity-- since there is a full queue and I took a point of privilege earlier-- to be able to give some remarks, specifically on what's in front of us, LB669, with Senator Hunt's motion to indefinitely postpone. I want to just start off by saying that this is not a reflection of Senator Storer's intent. I want to echo Senator Dungan's remarks on that. I do believe Senator Storer is negotiating in good faith. We've had good conversations off the mic around where there are places of tension, parts where we disagree. We started that conversation on Friday, and then have continued that through this morning. And so I just want to make sure that that is uplifted, that we do have alignment in the goal, that we want to make sure that we are supporting victims of sex trafficking. I think we need to expand that as we are talking in the conversation around survivors of intimate partner violence, as well as then, how do we get there. That's really where this discourse is rooted in. How are we getting there? What does that look like as policymakers? And that's our job, why we're here. And that why I have my reconsider up around this last vote, is because we need to have critical dialogue about the policies that we put forward and the implications of those policies because policies impact our day-to-day and drive what is happening for our various constituents and stakeholder groups, whether that are the

people that we are saying are at the center of this, which are the people being sex-trafficked and navigating intimate partner violence, as well as the providers, who are a major stakeholder in the, the heart of the bill, LB669. So we talked a little bit about this, and some of my colleagues already mentioned about where this statute is situated. So some of my concerns that I want to get on the record for this bill first start with the situating of the legislation. It is rooted and a part of abortion language-- I would say anti-abortion language that further restricts. And so, when we talk about being able to ensure that practitioners are able to go upstream and that they have the training and tools needed to be able to assess where someone is and if they are experiencing reproductive coercion, I think where the bill in itself is not appropriate. So there's misalignment there, for me. I also wanted to read a definition from the National Domestic Violence Hotline, so a nonpartisan resource, national resource that folks are using around the definition of reproductive coercion, because I'm not sure everyone is grounded in that language and I think that's important to drive our debate and, and dialogue today. So reproductive coercion and abuse are behaviors intended to maintain power and control in a relationship by dominating a partner's reproductive and sexual health. It may include attempts to impregnate a partner against their will, control outcomes of a partner's pregnancy, coerce or force a partner to have unprotected sex, or interfere with contraceptive methods. And so, if we are rooted in reproductive coercion and that is the intention of this bill, I think we are limited in scope and we're not getting there. It's not meeting the mark of how we are talking about reproductive coercion and what the experts are saying and how reproductive coercion happens. I know that there is an amendment that would look at ensuring-- can I have a gavel, Mr. President? Thank you. It gets a little loud in here. And all the side conversations, sometimes it's hard to focus. I know that there is amendment up on the board that will try to address some of that. But when you talk about reproductive coercion, that is a span of someone's reproductive health journey. I am fortunate to work in the reproductive health space in my day job, and so I have a little bit deeper understanding and knowledge around the full spectrum of reproductive health and all the practitioners it may touch, that spectrum of care when you are thinking about when coercion can be uncovered, and where someone who is needing support can access that support. And so with the amendment to add OBs into that-- the language of LB669, I think OBs should be a part of that conversation. I do think the situating of that into statutes around abortion is not the best alignment, and there are other practitioners that are actually

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best suited to be able to do that type of counseling, which is already happening. I think, you know, there's maybe, a, a misunderstanding, or maybe lack of understanding around all of the different types of practitioners that are providing reproductive care, and where those intersections can happen for support. And I do think that by only having OBs, we're missing a larger variety of folks that are practitioners that are also better suited to have the conversation and give that type of counseling. When you think about your obstetrics appointments, they are 10 minutes. You may not know your OB intimately, in that way. And again, you are navigating a very traumatic, sometimes life or death situation. And so what does that look like to have that person be equipped to recognize the signs, be able to have a set of interventions and training to be able to support that person. And so, I do agree with Senator Dungan on going upstream, and that's a place where I think policy is best situated. It's why I wanted to run for office. Policy should be used to go upstream on complex issues that our society is navigating. And to me, an upstream solution would be working with those practitioners to better understand their types of training and scope, so that anyone that is in that continuity of care, that continuum of care for reproductive health is able to identify and provide support. And so, going back to the data from the National Domestic Violence Hotline, they did a study of 3,400 respondents around reproductive coercion, so directly for what we are speaking to. And in this, this research, 23% of respondents of that 3,400 said that their current or former partner pressured them into becoming pregnant, and 13% of respondents said their current or former partner used or threatened violence while they were pregnant. And so there's also, you know, the full spectrum of someone's birth or reproductive journey that I think is still not articulated clearly, in a way that makes me feel like, OK, this bill has alignment to the intention or what we hope to achieve. Outside of accessing abortion care, which I will talk about a minute, from this research, people that are navigating intimate partner violence and being sa-- sex-trafficked are being forced to have pregnancies, are being forced to get pregnant. I worked at-- in-- out at the Child Advocacy Center in Dallas, when I lived there, in Dallas County. We saw the worst cases of child abuse that you would ever see, in my opinion, in the nation. And it's the reason why other states adopted this interdisciplinary model. And some of the stories that are etched and burned into my brain that I cannot forget around the types of abuse, not only that parent, who was pregnant, navigated, but then the children that they were forced to have, then experienced. And so, the conversation is broader than just what we are talking about around

abortion care, and that the data from this study uplifts that. The, the study goes on to talk about that access to reproductive healthcare is actually the linchpin in helping survivors, whether it's intimate partner violence or folks navigating sex trafficking, so that access to that healthcare is what they are saying states can do to move the needle on this. And they, they say in their report-- and I will actually make some copies and pass this out-- through the pages that including abortion care is a lifeline for so many survivors of intimate partner violence. So again, there was some data read in-- into the record on the mic around this that I also wanted to uplift that the experts have said, in terms of reproductive care and access, that accessing specifically abortion care, is the lifeline and what does that look like. And so, I see my time is almost up. I would ask for your reconsider on the motion to indefinitely postpone. And again, this is not a reflection of not wanting to support sex trafficking victims, survivors of intimate partner violence. It's around how do we get there and having intentional dialogue about the policies that we are put-- that are put in front of us. And that is my intention here, is to have that critical dialogue with my colleagues around this legislation. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Spivey. Senator Lonowski, you're recognized to speak.

LONOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. President. I stand in support of LB669 and Senator Storer's attempts here. Sex trafficking involves using force. Sex trafficking involves using fraud. Sex trafficking involves using coercion. Young women and men are being sex trafficked at increasing rates, according to the Department of Justice and increasing rates in our state. As trafficking continues to be a problem, some as young as 10 years old have been violated, and some as old as 60 years old have also been violated. Some victims are white, some victims are Asian, some victims are Hispanic, and as Senator Spivey noted last week, some victims are Black. Victims may include youth, runaways, those in foster care, financially unstable, history of substance abuse, those with mental health disorders, lack of familial support, or history of abuse and neglect. Most concerning is the common denominator or sex trafficking and abortion is those between ages 15 to 24. Unplanned pregnancies are also common among sex trafficking victims. As every moment passes, we jeopardize each and every single victim of sex trafficking. Senator Storer's bill, LB669, gives these people, these victims, a voice, a lifeline, and maybe a last chance to be heard. Thank you, Mr. President.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Lonowski. Mr. Clerk. Returning to the queue, Senator Lippincott, you're recognized to speak.

LIPPINCOTT: Thank you, sir. I do support LB669 by Senator Tanya Storer. Recently, I watched the movie, *The Sound of Freedom*. The movie portrayed an American government official who tracked down a young son and daughter who had been kidnapped. The children's father had been tricked by a woman who told him, the father, that the kids were being taken to a day-long audition for parts in a movie. But when the father came home-- or came to pick the kids up at the end of the day, he found only an empty building. The American agent, played by Jim Caviezel, went to great lengths to recover the children, and the movie will leave you sober, saddened and distraught at the depths of the depravity of mankind. It is a true story. The film is based on these events, which took place a few years ago, beyond our southern border. And we tell ourselves that these things do not happen here, but they do. We've even had several incidents of human trafficking here in Nebraska. As a matter of fact, the State Patrol has reported that there's over 900 sex trafficking events which take place per month here in Nebraska. Omaha, 675 per month on average; Lincoln, 200; and even in Grand Island, 65 sex trafficking events happen per month. The average age for entering the sex trade is 13 years old. This is all according to the Nebraska State Patrol. 27% of those who are trafficked are children. They are mostly used for labor purposes, but some are sold as sex slaves. Of the children being trafficked, 66%, 2/3, are girls. Overall, Nebraska has seen a total of 92 prosecutions for human trafficking for labor and sex slavery, with 88 of those prosecutions in just the past 7 years. Furthermore, this is happening more and more often, aided and abetted by the last administration's loose open border policies. According to a Massachusetts Institute for Technology operational data simulation performed one million times, there are now up to 29 million illegals in the United States. And reports show that many of these individuals are single, military-aged men, inmates from foreign prisons, gang members, known terrorists, as well as unaccompanied minors. It's also known that many women were being raped during their journey to and their illegal entry into our country. Interesting to note that during my time at Delta Airlines, based in Atlanta, Georgia, home of the world's busiest airport, the company would brief us-- Delta would brief us on what to, to look for in passengers who were possibly trafficking minors or young adults on our aircraft. And the flight attendants would be vigilant in looking for anything suspicious while serving the customers. Though I never encountered this on one of my flights, I heard of traffickers being

apprehended from Delta flights. This is a despicable and reprehensible crime. Forcibly abusing another person against their will for your own pleasure or profit is heinous. We, as individual Americans, what can we do? Keep your eyes and ears open for any type of suspicious behavior that might suggest enslavement. Worldwide slavery is more widespread now than at any time in our history. And we, the United States, are a marketplace with money. Our State Attorney General, Mike Hilgers has set up a human trafficking hotline at 888-373-7888. Don't hesitate to call if you see something suspicious. In closing credits of the movie, Caviezel tells of the struggle that Angel Studios had in bringing the movie to theaters. It took 5 years of fighting marketplace forces that did not want the truth of this movie to be shown to Americans. This film clearly shows the anguish of children being separated from their families and the evils of those who enslaved them. But it also shows how one brave and courageous man, empowered and guided by the hand of God, can prevail against the odds. Thank you, sir.

KELLY: Thank you, Senator Lippincott. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, some items. Amendments to be printed from Senator Storer to LB669. Additionally, amendments to be printed from Senator McKinney to LB742. Name adds: Senator Hardin, name added to LB429; Senator Andersen to LB938. Finally, a priority motion, Senator Dungan would move to adjourn the body until Tuesday, February 3, at 10:00 a.m.

KELLY: The question is the motion to adjourn. All those in favor, say aye. Those opposed, nay. The Legislature is adjourned.