

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office

General Affairs Committee February 23, 2026

Rough Draft

HOLDCROFT: Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. I am Senator Rick Holdcroft, representing Legislative District 36, and I serve as chair of the committee. The committee will take up the bills in the order posted. This public hearing today is your opportunity to be part of the legislative process and to express your position on the proposed legislation before us. If you are planning to testify today, please fill out one of the green testifier sheets that are on the table at the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill it out completely. Please move to the front row to be ready to testify. When it is your turn to come forward, give the testifier sheet to the page. If you do not wish to testify but would like to indicate your position on a bill, there are also yellow sign-in sheets back at the table for each bill. These sheets will be included as an exhibit in the official hearing record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Tell us your name, and spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. We will begin each bill hearing today with the introducer's opening statement, followed by the proponents of the bill, then opponents, and finally, by anyone speaking in the neutral capacity. We will finish with a closing statement by the introducer if they wish to give one. We will be on a three-minute time-- light system for all testifiers. When you begin your testimony, the light on the table will be green. When the yellow light comes on, you have one minute remaining, and the red light, red light indicates your time is finished. Questions from the committee may follow, which do not count against your time. Also, committee members may come and go during the hearing. This has nothing to do with the importance of the bills being heard. It is just part of the process, as senators may have bills to introduce in other committees. A few final items to facilitate today's hearing. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony, please bring up at least 12 copies and give them to the page. Please note that thumb drives, CDs, DVDs, oversized documents, books, lists of signatures, and similar items will not be accepted as exhibits for the record. Props, charts, or other visual aids cannot be used simply because they cannot be transcribed. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Verbal outbursts or applause are not permitted in the hearing room. Such behavior may be cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. Finally, committee procedures for all committees state that written position comments on a bill to be included in the record must be submitted by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. The only acceptable method of submission is via the Legislature's website at Nebraskalegislature.gov. Written position letters will be included in

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the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included on the committee statement. You may submit a position comment for the record or testify in person, not both. I will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting on my left.

ANDERSEN: Good afternoon. I'm Senator Bob Andersen. I represent District 49, which is northwest Sarpy County in Omaha.

DeKAY: Hi. Barry DeKay, representing District 40, which consists of Holt, Knox, Cedar, Antelope, northern part of Pierce, northern part of Dixon Counties.

J. CAVANAUGH: Good afternoon. John Cavanaugh, I represent District 9 in midtown Omaha.

QUICK: Dan Quick, District 35, Grand Island.

CLOUSE: Good afternoon. Stan Clouse, District 37, which is Kearney, Shelton, and Gibbon in Buffalo County.

STORM: Good afternoon. Jared Storm, District 23, Saunders, Butler, Colfax County.

HOLDCROFT: Also, Senator Cavanaugh acts as the vice chair of this committee. Also assisting the committee today, to my right is our legal counsel, Kevin Langevin, and to my far left is our committee clerk, Barb Dorn. Our pages for the committee today are-- and I'll let them introduce themselves.

KYANNE CASPERSON: Hi, everyone. My name is Kyanne, and I am in a fourth-year sociology major at UNL.

DEMET GEDIK: Hi, my name is Demet Gedik. I also go to UNL, and I'm a political science major.

HOLDCROFT: Today's agenda is posted outside the hearing room. With that, we will start our--today's hearings with some nominees. Up first is Boyd Pedersen, for the State Electric Board. Welcome.

BOYD PEDERSEN: And you, also. I had to come see you all, eye to eye. Too easy to do a teleconference.

HOLDCROFT: Yeah, there you go. Go ahead.

BOYD PEDERSEN: It's my second term for the State Electrical Board-- and let her pass the worksheet out. I figured I'd make up a little resume for you to go out and see some of the items I've been involved in. Nonetheless, I started my career when I was 16, and had some-- it kind of follows along there-- had some incredible mentors along the way. The first spot I stopped certainly wasn't an incredible mentor, but we got past that part-- and then, worked on through high school and into college. And those times, we could have work release, is kind of when it just started, and so I went as an apprentice all the way through high school years that I had remaining. And I attended Northeast Tech, which Northeast Tech was just like many other community colleges. They just had transitioned to being a technical college. And so our course was only a one-year diploma course. Of course, this is in the Stone Ages, so that was formal education. And, and at that point, I went to work for a, a larger building contractor that was in a town south of where I grew up. And I was electrician for the crew, and grew the market there, and networked and made contacts, and then proceeded, after he retired, into my own company, or business, at that point. And then, I can skip ahead or proceed. The, the first employee we hired was in 1988. And since then, it's 40, plus several peripheral employees and several business entities. And I had a-- the first inspector I had much to do with was Terry Carlson, and Terry had moved up the ladder and he was the chief inspector. And so, I took my exam, and must have did OK because I didn't get a written notification. I got it from him, along with a job offer. And I turned him down, and, and then, you can see the rest of the entities that I'm involved in. But then, at that point several of the inspectors, in which-- we do work all over Nebraska and Kansas and Iowa. Several inspectors asked me if I had entertained the idea of being a board member, and I blew them off originally. And then the path of the previous director caused concern, and I figured that I could make a difference, and so I said yes, I'll do it. So my path's a little bit different than most everybody else's. I was asked to be in it, instead of being-- signing on the dotted line. But nonetheless, I take it very seriously. I, I serve on a lot of boards. I take it very seriously, to make sure that you know I was there, and that I do best as possible.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Any questions? Yes, Senator Storm.

STORM: Thank you, Chair Holdcroft. Thank you for being here. I have one question. So you worked with Milford--

BOYD PEDERSEN: Wiehenkel.

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STORM: So he was the lead electrician on the Enola Gay?

BOYD PEDERSEN: He was.

STORM: He's from Nebraska?

BOYD PEDERSEN: [INAUDIBLE] plant, just up the road.

STORM: He's from Nebraska?

BOYD PEDERSEN: Lived-- grew up in my hometown.

STORM: Huh. OK.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Quick comment for Senator Storm. Actually, Enola Gay was built at Offutt, just so you know. That's why the guy was here as a Nebraskan. It was actually built in building D of-- at Offutt. So the, so the question I have for you is, what is the scope of the duties of the, of the Electrical Board?

BOYD PEDERSEN: The particular scope of-- my particular facet is I'm a master. There are-- there's a utility engineer, a regular electrical engineer, a utility-- a city utility representation, and I'm one of the masters. And so obviously, the, the code and business is my life.

ANDERSEN: So will you be dealing and helping to articulate the, the International Building Codes and which ones we should be in compliance with?

BOYD PEDERSEN: International Building Code isn't so much of my expertise. I'm far more into the industrial end of it.

ANDERSEN: Grain elevators, I saw.

BOYD PEDERSEN: And-- yeah, and then on up the ladder. But as far as building codes, I'm fairly well-versed, but so much of those avenues are not necessarily of an International Building Code. But yeah, I'm certainly versed on other areas.

ANDERSEN: OK. Yeah, I sit on a different committee in which we do deal with the international-- the IBC and, and IRC codes. And a lot of times, there's things that they want to insert into the electrical codes and energy codes that are really-- I'm more for the safety and security of the general population, but some of these codes are what I

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see as kind of exorbitant, and where they want have different kinds of switches and dimmer switches, and they want to mandate these things. What are your thoughts on the optional parts of code as opposed to the safety-driven parts of code?

BOYD PEDERSEN: You got to-- what you're saying, you've got to be careful what you wish for.

ANDERSEN: I think, I think the state sometimes can force things on people, force adherence to codes that should be optional.

BOYD PEDERSEN: In which they-- there certainly is, there certainly is that aspect. But you need to bear in mind that-- so oftentimes, it's just like speed limits and everything else, the codes are put there protect you from you--

ANDERSEN: Agreed.

BOYD PEDERSEN: --and, and to be a, a public asset in safety. Do I say that there isn't, in this Chamber or in the Legislature or in general, rules that should be augmented that are antiquated at this point, either augmented, rewritten, or deleted? I absolutely do. But as far as the, the code as it's written, do I agree with everything that's in there? Of course I don't. But am I going to enforce it? You bet I am.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very-- oh.

ANDERSEN: Senator DeKay has a question.

HOLDCROFT: Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. What's the-- from where you're located, what's the radius of where you do business in?

BOYD PEDERSEN: Well, I go clear up to Manoa occasionally, if that's what you're asking.

DeKAY: Do you enforce the electrical codes there?

BOYD PEDERSEN: We've gone-- we have-- the entire state's our playground. And I knew all but-- I probably knew 90% of the inspectors in the state of Nebraska before I joined the board. Two of them worked

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for us, one of them applied for a job for us, so-- yeah. But we do that, northern Kansas and Iowa.

DeKAY: Do you do anything with, like, the ethanol plants or anything?

BOYD PEDERSEN: Yes, we do.

DeKAY: OK.

BOYD PEDERSEN: We do. We only do one wind farm, and that's the one that's north of Page.

DeKAY: North of Page. OK. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee?

ROUNTREE: I do.

HOLDCROFT: Yes, Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Chairman Holdcroft. And thank you so much, sir, for being here. And likewise, I'm impressed with you knowing Milford, that worked on the Enola Gay out at Offutt. But looking at your statement, here, you said, concerned about the leadership path of the previous director of the Nebraska SED. And knowing that I can make a difference, I was compelled to apply for the SED Board position.

BOYD PEDERSEN: Absolutely.

ROUNTREE: What was that direction? You might have already talked about it before I came in.

BOYD PEDERSEN: He was more-- he was far more concerned in being punitive--

ROUNTREE: OK.

BOYD PEDERSEN: --or being a policeman--

ROUNTREE: OK.

BOYD PEDERSEN: --versus a educator.

ROUNTREE: OK. That's, that's fair.

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BOYD PEDERSEN: And I figure that if you can't-- if you don't know enough about the subject to talk frankly about it, you're not the guy.

ROUNTREE: I understand. Thank you.

BOYD PEDERSEN: And that's exactly why I'm here.

ROUNTREE: All right. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

BOYD PEDERSEN: I'm [INAUDIBLE] for some grill in here.

HOLDCROFT: We'll see if there's anybody who speaks against you.

BOYD PEDERSEN: Thank you, sirs.

HOLDCROFT: Any-- anyone speaking for this nominee? A proponent? Anyone speaking in opposition to this nominee? Anyone speaking in a neutral capacity? OK. With that, that will close the hearing on Mr. is it-- I'm sorry. Is it Pedersen or Pedersen?

BOYD PEDERSEN: Pedersen, but I'll get in trouble if I don't say it that way.

HOLDCROFT: All right.

BOYD PEDERSEN: The guy with the red coat [INAUDIBLE].

HOLDCROFT: OK. Thank you, Mr. Pedersen. All right. Our next nominee for the State Electrical Board is Tyler Ritz, by Zoom. Are you out there? Mr. Ritz?

TYLER RITZ: Yes. Can you hear me OK?

HOLDCROFT: Yes, I can. So go ahead with your opening.

TYLER RITZ: All right. My name is Tyler Ritz. I am here for the inspector chair for the Nebraska State Electrical Board. I've been an electrician for 19 years, worked in commercial, residential, a little bit of industrial. I have been an inspector for the last 8 1/2 years, and also do building and electrical inspections. I'm currently doing around 1,300 inspections a year. I am also a board member of the IAEEI, which is currently the Independent Alliance of Electrical Industry. I've been a part of that for about 5 years. I joined the Nebraska

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State Electrical Board actually, last May, kind of as an interim, after someone left, retired, and it's been going good since then, I guess. I think I am a good addition to the board, just because I inspect more than electrical. I like to see how it works together. Also, try to give insight into how the electrical may or may not affect other aspects of building code-- something that someone had mentioned earlier, I heard. But other than that, yeah, I have enjoyed it and I would like to keep doing it.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Ritz. See if there are any questions from the committee. You're going to get off lucky here, Mr. Ritz. There are no questions for you. Are there anyone here to speak as a proponent? Anyone here to speak as an opponent? Anyone here to speak in-- as a neutral-- in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on Mr. Ritz. Thank you very much.

TYLER RITZ: Yeah. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Next, next person is an appointment to the State Racing and Gaming Commission, Randall Conroy. Welcome.

RANDALL CONROY: Thank you, Chairman, Vice Chairman, Senators. Thank you very much. My name is Randall Conroy, and I'm a nominee for the Race and Engagement Commission. Randall, R-a-n-d-a-l-l C-o-n-r-o-y. So I was born and raised in Nebraska a few years ago, and then had a 23-year career in the casino gaming business and I retired in 2024. Relocated-- I came, came home basically, with my family to the Papillion area. In those 23 years, I had leadership positions in all of those years. In the last 10 years I was the casino general manager, which meant I oversaw the entirety of the casino that I, I worked at. I worked in 6 different gaming jurisdictions, starting off in Kansas at a tribal operation. I worked at Nevada, Pennsylvania, 2 casinos in Illinois, and then my final position was in Maryland, so really have gaming in my blood. And as I retired in 2024, I was looking for some opportunities to make a contribution to the state and stay, you know, active in the community, and then this position came available last year. I made an application, met with the Governor, and, and think this would be a good fit for myself. So I'm excited for the opportunity, and happy to answer any questions you may have.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Conroy. Any questions from the committee? Senator Cavanaugh.

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J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here, Mr. Conroy. I'm trying to remember. I was just trying to pull it up. The Racing and Gaming Commission, are there-- are you filling a specific position on that?

RANDALL CONROY: I am, yeah. I believe the position is kind of the, the gaming expert on the, on the commission. I think there's a horse racing expert, and a gaming expert, and there's legislative districts that have representation.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah.

RANDALL CONROY: But given my experience with gaming, I think it seems like a good fit. And really, I, I, I got to know Executive Director Ricketts; very impressed with what I've, what I've seen so far. Gaming is new to Nebraska, certainly, and I think with my 23 years in the, in the business, hopefully I can add some-- contribute to their success.

J. CAVANAUGH: I seem to recall the first go-around when we were appointing folks, we didn't have anybody in Nebraska who had any gaming experience--

RANDALL CONROY: Yeah, yeah.

J. CAVANAUGH: --so that was a tough spot to fill. So thanks for your willingness to serve.

RANDALL CONROY: Sure. Thank you.

J. CAVANAUGH: Welcome back.

RANDALL CONROY: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Did you work-- over your 23 years, did you work in any gaming situations like we have in Nebraska now, with the combination of casino and horse, horse tracks on the same location?

RANDALL CONROY: I did, Senator, yes. In Illinois, I had operations of a casino, but I also had operational responsibilities for a race track in Paducah, Kentucky. So I was licensed by the Kentucky Horse Racing Association. Additionally, in Pennsylvania, we had a very large casino operation that was attached to a harness standardbred track. So a, a, a very big operation, raced 150 days a year, and I was licensed there

in, in the Harness Horse Racing [SIC] Association. So I have a little bit of experience in the horse racing business. And certainly, what I've come to find is the, the, the rest of the commission has a lot of experience in the horse racing businesses, so I'm going to learn from them, and then hopefully add it with my casino experience.

DeKAY: With your years of experience, did you, did you see that from start of day one or did you step into a position where they were combined together?

RANDALL CONROY: I was stepping into a position that, that already existed, from a horse perspective.

DeKAY: So if there were any bugs to be worked out in the system, they were basically taken care of early on.

RANDALL CONROY: Yeah. I think that anytime you open up a new business like that, not unlike casinos, there's going to be some bugs that need to be ironed out. In those two situations, I came into situations that were pretty, pretty well-established.

DeKAY: OK. Thank you.

RANDALL CONROY: Sure.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Yes, Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Chairman Holdcroft. Mr. Conroy, quick question. When you say you're licensed, what, what all's involved in being licensed for horse tracks and [INAUDIBLE] and things like that? What's that entail?

RANDALL CONROY: Yeah. The, the casino business licensure is extremely intense. There are-- based on the jurisdiction. We had significant background checks. People would go physically interview my neighbors from 10 years ago, to-- tell me about Mr. Conroy, here. Was he an all-right guy? From a horse perspective, it wasn't as intense. So the licensure I had for horse racing was in Pennsylvania and Kentucky. Those were not as elaborate investigations. But I would say every jurisdiction that I've worked in, is, is a very, I won't say obtrusive, but it's-- they get into your background. And, you know, these states do not want to have people that don't have-- nothing but the best as far of a, of a background. Any checkered history would not be appropriate. So throughout my 23-year career, you know, I've had no issues with licensure. And, you know, I play by the book. And, you

know, those books were established by the commissions in those states. So now that I'm, you know, interested in, in being part of that commission, I can help establish those and, and reinforce the existing laws on the books, and be supportive of the, of, of the staff.

CLOUSE: OK. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you, Chairman Holdcroft, and thank you so much, sir, for being here. I have a two-fold question. Number one is, how did you end up in Paducah, Kentucky? That's the first one. And then secondly, with the variant background that you have, we are now growing in our quarter horse and our thoroughbred horse racing here in the state. How would your experience help to bring that and elevate it and get it back to a world-class operation?

RANDALL CONROY: Well, thank you for the question. A lot of people ask me what was my favorite place to, to work at of, of different casinos. I would say from a-- just an overall perspective, Paducah was the best.

ROUNTREE: OK. OK.

RANDALL CONROY: I've, I've been all over the place-- Philadelphia, Baltimore, everywhere, but we love Paducah. It was just a very nice operation there. And there-- across the, the river there, the Ohio River, was Metropolis, Illinois, home of Superman. And so, my employer had a casino there and asked me to go run that for a couple years. And it was a, it was a great learning experience for me, so everyone's a little bit different there. Your second question, Senator, I'm not going to tell you that I have a great level of expertise growing a horse-- the horse business in Nebraska. I certainly enjoyed getting to understand that business at the tracks that I worked at. Mine was more casino-centric.

ROUNTREE: OK.

RANDALL CONROY: But, you know, I think that I, I ask a lot of questions, as, as maybe Executive Director Ricketts may-- might suggest. I want to know those businesses. I want to know how I can play a part and contribute to that. And I'll certainly do that from the casinos primarily, but I-- in this position, I'm going to learn as much as I can about the racing business and understand that a little bit better.

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ROUNTREE: OK. Thank you so much.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much, sir.

RANDALL CONROY: Thank you for your time. Appreciate it.

HOLDCROFT: Anyone speaking as a proponent for this nominee? Any opponents? Any neutral testifiers? Seeing none, that closes our hearing on Mr. Conroy. The next one, two, three, four, five nominees are for the Nebraska Arts Council. First up is Brenda Davis. Welcome.

BRENDA DAVIS: Thank you. My name is Brenda Davis, B-r-e-n-d-a D-a-v-i-s. The first thing I would like to say is my thanks to any veterans in the room. I am honored to be the daughter of a veteran of, of the Vietnam War. My father served in the Brown Water Navy and sacrificed so much, and to this day, still sacrifices. So I just want to say thank you, to all of you. I grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, here, and graduated, and decided to leave Nebraska. I didn't want to come back. I wanted to major in theater, wanted to go to Chicago and do wonderful things. And so, I found myself in Chicago, wonderful city, majored in theater, and found, about halfway through, that I was more of a set designer than an actor. I draw and love to draw, and has-- then, from there, worked freelance in Chicago for another 4 years, and went all over the world. I went to Italy, to Milan, as a matter of fact, to work at La Scala, the big opera house you saw some of, over the last couple of weeks. I worked in Australia, at many, many places, and then ended up at Yale for grad school, in Connecticut. What brought me back to Nebraska was motherhood. And so, in defense of the money that goes to the Nebraska Arts Council, I would like to say there is so much here. And whenever I see or I listen to a politician come to Beatrice and talk to us and say, well, what we really need to work on is, is all the brain drain that happens around here and people leaving. And I was one of them. And I would say the Nebraska Arts Council and all of its goals, defend the beauty of living in Nebraska, and make the small towns in Nebraska attractive, and make live events more well-known. When you drive through a town and you see public art or you see a, a, a, a sign, you know, advertising a local, a local live music event or a local theater event, or you see a mural, it makes you think there's something going on there. There's life, there's excitement. They also support wonderfully education programs for the elderly and for the very young and make Nebraska a beautif-- beautiful place to live. I now live in Beatrice. My kids are in high school there and in elementary school, and I serve on the, the booster

club for the high school arts program and do all kinds of wonderful things there. I, I teach at the University of Nebraska part-time, drawing, drafting for theater artists. I also teach scenic art, all those kinds of things. But I found my love for Nebraska after I left for 11 years, so I'm so happy to continue serving on the Nebraska Arts Council.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Ms. Davis. I appreciate that. Any questions from the committee? Wow, you can get off easy. Thank you very much.

BRENDA DAVIS: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Any proponents for this-- no, no. You may return to your seat. Any proponents for this nominee? Any opponents for the nominee? Anyone speaking in the neutral? OK. With that, that will conclude our, our nominee for Ms. Davis. Next up is Crystal Dunning. Welcome.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Good afternoon. My name is Crystal Dunning. I originally grew up in south Louisiana and moved to Nebraska for grad school. For perspective, I went to a very small school for undergrad in central Louisiana. They locked the gates at 10 p.m. And I wanted a Big 10 experience for grad school, so I moved here, and really fell in love with Lincoln and with Nebraska. My degree was in voice performance, and originally thought, I'm going to move to Nebraska, and then I'll move back to Louisiana. And that did not happen. I really fell in love with-- really fell in love with the, the culture. And coming from a place like south Louisiana, where there's such southern hospitality, I didn't expect to find something similar here, in, in Nebraska. The people were very warm and welcoming and kind. And so, similar to Brenda's story, I really fell in love with what I found here. One of the things that originally attracted me to Lincoln, in particular, I remember as a grad student was walking through the Haymarket district, which at the time had recently been revitalized. And as a musician, I was really attracted to the visual art in the area. And that was when I went away for the first time seeing kind of awakened to the visual arts scene. Fast forward, I had the opportunity to get connected to the Lincoln Community Theater-- or the Lincoln Community Playhouse rather, and served as their development director and their education director after graduation. Fast forward a little bit further. After serving on the Nebraska Arts Council, had the opportunity to be exposed to organizations across the state of Nebraska, and have really appreciated the opportunity to see the different, the different ways that the state of Nebraska supports the arts across the state. That being said, my current, kind of day-to-day

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is in not-for-profit fundraising, and so just seeing the importance of fundraising for nonprofits as a whole, across the arts but also across not-for-profits, is kind of what I do in the day-to-day, and just really looking forward to continuing my role with Nebraska Arts Council as a whole.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Questions from the committee? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you Senator Holdcroft. Thank you for being here. So you're an opera singer?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Yes.

CLOUSE: Can you belt out a few?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: I would prefer not to on a random, on a random Monday morning, but if it's required.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Yes, Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Besides the southern hospitality, do you find the climate similar to Louisiana in Lincoln, Nebraska?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Not in the slightest, but I'm learning to love it.

DeKAY: OK.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Chairman. And, and thank you for being here. Are-- you are currently on the Art-- Nebraska Arts Council? Is that--

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Correct.

ANDERSEN: When, when were you appointed?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: That would have been in September of 2023, if my memory is serving correctly.

ANDERSEN: OK, so you have some experience with it. What would you say is probably your greatest focus area since you got some time with the council? Where, where do you think we need to work on?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Can you repeat that?

ANDERSEN: What do you think we need to work on most?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Are you talking about the state or are you talking about the council? Where do you, where do you--

ANDERSEN: Council. All right. Would you have a focus area, when you're reappointed?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: I think-- I want to-- I personally want to ensure I'm focusing to make sure programs continue to get the funding they need. And by that, I mean anytime I see a notification or an email come across my desk about a bill or anything like that, I'm really paying attention to what that funding or a change in funding is going to do to the programming. So from start to finish, what that, what that really means for the programming. I think it's really easy to think big picture, like here, what the bill might do.

ANDERSEN: Sure.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: But really think about what does that mean for the programming? What does that mean for the people in this city, in the community that it's going to impact? That-- what program does that mean they no longer have access to? And I want to make sure that I, I really think about that end result, so that I can articulate that well.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Yes, Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Do you teach voice or opera now?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: I don't currently, at the moment. I used to.

DeKAY: OK. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Chairman Holdcroft. And thank you so much. We'd love to hear you. But just going back to what Senator Andersen was asking about funding. You were talking about nonprofit fundraising. How responsive is our philanthropic community to supporting the arts, as you are reaching out and soliciting funds? How responsive is our philanthropic community in supporting the arts?

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Yeah. Great question. You know, I also have the opportunity to sit on-- currently, on the, the Lincoln Community Playhouse Board, but in my day-to-day work, I work with nonprofits across the country. So I would say I'm not as in-tune with just the Nebraska community. It's kind of more general.

ROUNTREE: OK.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: And it varies across the--

ROUNTREE: OK.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: It varies. Reports will tell us that philanthropic fundraising is down.

ROUNTREE: OK.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Cash. However, various things like stock or noncash giving can be up. Again, it de-- it depends. And it also depends on the various wealth of the individual.

ROUNTREE: OK. Thank you so much. I appreciate that.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Yes.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

CRYSTAL DUNNING: Yes.

HOLDCROFT: Anyone speaking as a proponent for this nominee? Opponents? Neutral? Seeing none, that closes our hearing on Crystal Dunning. Up next is Shari Hofschire. Am I supposed to read this letter? Really, I have to read the letter? OK. My name is Sharon Hofschire, spelled S-h-a-r-o-n H-o-f-s-c-h-i-r-e. I have been reappointed to the Nebraska Arts Council Board of Directors by the Governor and am requesting your approval for a second full term. I have had the privilege of serving as chair of the board and greatly value my involvement with the representatives from other districts. In my professional life, I was an art historian and arts educator at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. I provided professional development in arts integration and the Nebraska State Fine Arts Standards to educators with workshops held throughout the state for over 16 years. I was also a grant recipient and wanted to pay back, after seeing the power and impact these state grant funds have on the people of the state. After joining the

Nebraska Arts Council, I have been able to continue with professional development opportunities to Nebraska communities. Each year, I have toured all over the state and attended listening forums, observing the incredible explosion of the creative districts. As state legislators, you should be proud of this program that you have supported. The economic impact has been tremendous for small communities who are able to rediscover their heritage and cultural richness while celebrating their history and future, and more communities continue to seek inclusion than anyone ever anticipated. My appointment has allowed me to work with other organizations who have helped support and enrich the cultural environment in our state, Mid-America Arts Alliance, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, Nebraskans for the Arts, Humanitarians-- Humanities Nebraska, and the highly successful Nebraska Cultural Endowment, which private-public partnership is recognized and respected nationally for its commitment to Nebraska communities. Once again, as a state senator, you should be proud of this achievement and your past support for NCE. I take my current position and responsibilities very seriously, and I want to continue to be of service. This is an opportunity to use my knowledge of Nebraska's cultural environment with my passion for the arts to continue the tremendous impact the Nebraska Arts Council is making on communities, large and small, throughout the state. Thank you. That was from Sharon Hofschire.

DeKAY: I have questions.

HOLDCROFT: No questions. Anyone speaking as a proponent for this nominee? Any opponents? Neutral testifiers? OK. That will close our hearing on Sharon Hofschire. OK. I mean, I've lost my way here. Next up is Timothy Jeffrey. Welcome.

TIM JEFFREY: My name is Tim Jeffery, T-i-m J-e-f-f-r-e-y. I'm honored to be considered for consideration for the Nebraska Arts Council. Unlike my 3 former colleagues, I think myself and one other are new appointees here on the Arts Council, and I appreciate the confidence placed in me by the Governor and his staff for this appointment. I'm a Nebraska native, currently living in Dundee neighborhood of Omaha. My wife and I have 5 kids. We are active foster parents working with Boys Town and the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Professionally, I've been employed with Kiewit for about 30 years, currently as a director of asset management with Kiewit. My primary arts involvement is that of the Board of, I'm a Board of Trustee member for over 10 years with the Omaha Community Playhouse, and I currently serve as the president of the board this year and next. As a

kid, I can remember riding my bike up to the arts cart up at Thomas Edison Elementary School. Little did I know, I, I-- that was-- I was enjoying arts and crafts that were provided by state and local funding at the time. My interest kind of continued in arts after that. Actually, I remember driving my kids, whether it was to school plays or to the Omaha Community Playhouse, while I sat in the green room and my son rehearsed for the Christmas Carol. And I was able to get a sense that there are many people in our community who have a passion for the arts and consider that part of their identity. The arts allow for a healthy channeling of energy for young and old. I continue to see that at the Playhouse today. And the, and the Playhouse today relies both on, on Nebraska talent, providing productions and entertainment for Nebraska audiences. The Playhouse is a grant recipient of Nebraska Arts Council in the state of Nebraska. The arts are an important part of making Nebraska more than just a drive-through state. As, as mentioned by Brenda earlier, just the, the murals, the VisitNebraska website, features 17 murals throughout the state, the largest of which is 34,000 square foot, and is on-- plastered on the east side of the Cordia building, downtown Omaha. Those are just one of, of many contributions that I think we made that Nebraska encourages here within the state to promote arts. There is also, I might mention, Southern Methodist University that has a ranking system. It's called the Data Arts Ranking System, and they do a lot of research about arts throughout the country. They ranked Nebraska 29 out of the 50 states. They are based on their criteria of arts vibrancy, which is more than just state and local funding. It includes participation, sponsorship. It includes employment within the arts sector. So 29, they actually mentioned as, as part of that or the strengths that they see in the state of Nebraska, are high attendance and participation relative to its population, high-quality arts institutions in our larger cities of Omaha, Lincoln and Kearney, growing creative districts, which, of course, is a, is a program that this body initiated in 2021, and solid philanthropic support in metro areas. So we're 29 currently. I'm sure that we can do better than that, just based on everything that we have going on and, and all the opportunities that we have as a state. I believe in the mission of the Nebraska Arts Council to promote, cultivate, and sustain the arts for the people of Nebraska. And I look forward to serving on that committee, if confirmed. Appreciate your time.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Jeffrey. Any questions? Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you, Chairman Holdcroft. And thank you so much, Mr. Jeffery, for your service and serving on the Arts Council. We are

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currently ranked 29th. What are your visions and thoughts as to how to elevate us and to move us up?

TIM JEFFREY: Good question. I would, you know, I think as we continue, I guess my own role with the Omaha Community Playhouse.

ROUNTREE: Yes, sir.

TIM JEFFREY: And that is not only are we wanting to survive, particularly through a, a time of, of challenging financial or fiscal times-- and, and we have our own challenges at the Playhouse, as I'm sure many other arts organizations do, and frankly, nonprofits do. But not only do we want to double down-- make sure that we're resourcing our programs as they should, right-sizing those resources, but also really taking advantage of the time to continue to promote high-quality performances at the Playhouse, and even looking forward, too, as we go through our master plan or-- strategic planning and master planning programs that we have ahead of us. I would say it's really focusing our, our resources, it's continuing public-private partnerships, of which we do have, with the Nebraska arts. And as we continue to, continue to make sure that those-- the funding is there so that we can see our business partners match that, as they currently do today.

ROUNTREE: All right. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee? Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. You mentioned through philanthropy, growing the arts in the metro area. How can you-- how do you think the arts can grow, or what's a, a road forward for the arts in rural Nebraska?

TIM JEFFREY: In rural Nebraska. I think we do-- you know, my time so far has been that of, of one meeting with the Nebraska Arts Council. But what I have seen from there is a tremendous emphasis on cultural activities, a tremendous emphasis partnering with the Passport Program to promote visits in rural Nebraska, and I've seen quite a bit of participation. Not only do we have a, do we have a representation of many areas outside of the larger cities in Nebraska, but we have representation from other areas outside of our-- other rural areas. So through that cultural emphasis, and then a lot of programs that NAC has which I still have yet to learn about, there, there seems to be a great focus on, on rural Nebraska.

DeKAY: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Any proponents for this nominee? Any o-- you can return to your seat. Any opponents for this nominee? I thought she was getting up here to be an opponent. Any neutral testifiers? Seeing none, that closes this hearing. Next up, Lori Williams. Welcome

LORI WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Lori Williams. It's L-o-r-i W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s. I was born and raised in Norfolk, Nebraska. Remember who's from there? Johnny Carson. I'll get to that in a little bit. Grew up there, married my high school sweetheart. We have 4 kids together. We have an independent insurance agency that we've been owners of for about 35 years. Once the kids got a little bit older, it was time for me to get busy and get back to volunteering in my community. I serve as the treasurer for my church, was the treasurer for an after-school daycare program. I'm a 22-year breast cancer survivor, and so I'm involved in an organization where we raise funds for support and research in the northeast Nebraska area. Done pretty good. Last year, we gave back over a million dollars, since we started, in 15 years. So why does a finance girl, an insurance girl, a mom, want to be a part of an arts council? Good question. I saw first-hand what a difference it can really make, because when I started doing that volunteering, I became the executive director of the Great American Comedy Festival, which is designed to honor the legacy of Johnny Carson. And a couple of years into that, we were gifted a grant from the Nebraska Arts Council. And when that happened, we saw the festival transition. We were actually able to reorganize it, and we were able to pay the comedians. We had always paid for their travel expenses, but when we could actually pay them to come for the weekend, the caliber of the comedians, it just changed. And when that happened, the whole festival changed. We started actually selling tickets and having great entertainment, and it perpetuated itself. And it became a little gem known across the comedy world in Norfolk, Nebraska. The arts matter in every community. Norfolk was one of them that got a creative district, and we've been gifted a building. They've started a-- kind of like a Hot Shops, from what you're familiar with, in Omaha. That's kind of starting in Norfolk. So there's a place where artists can actually come and collaborate and work. I think they're putting in a kiln yet, this fall. The art world in Nebraska is important, and I want to be able to be a part of seeing

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that continue. And I really appreciate the opportunity to be considered as an appointee.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Questions from the committee? Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Chairman Holdcroft. And thank you so much for your testimony. Your model year is a good year, but I appreciate you as you're coming on the board and the comedy. That's a part that we really haven't talked about in here today. But how do you see getting that particular part of the arts out, not only in Norfolk but in-- throughout Nebraska?

LORI WILLIAMS: Well, I'll tell you, in Norfolk, what spawned off of that, that, that comedy festival is that we now actually have a comedy club in Norfolk.

ROUNTREE: OK.

LORI WILLIAMS: And we have national comedians that are coming to Norfolk.

ROUNTREE: OK.

LORI WILLIAMS: Because it's known as a little hotbed of comedy support, and we're a little discerning about our comedians, too. We've been spoiled. We've had a lot of them. A lot of good ones and a lot of them that-- maybe not as good, but we had an amateur competition, and we layered that across the state. So we were doing it in Grand Island and Kearney. We did one in Omaha. There's so many avenues of art. You know, I think when people think of art, they think of paintings. But it's not. It's music, it's sculptures, it's murals, it getting the kids involved, getting them exposed to different things. I don't know how comedy could spread across the whole state, but I'm just telling you it's an art form, and Norfolk has kind of a-- they've got a little capture on it.

ROUNTREE: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you, just a couple quick questions. People like to come to Norfolk, Nebraska because they think that Nebraskans are easily humored?

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LORI WILLIAMS: No. We're actually kind of tough. We have a real fine line of humor in our area. We had to actually counsel them a little bit on that, like you can't really get to this subject area. And it was a-- you know, Johnny Carson was on TV, so it had to be family-friendly. And they had a hard time understanding what that definition was, so it was a, it was a learning curve. But the ones that listened, they did great. And, and they just loved-- it was always so fun to watch this. They'd come in, and they were New Yorkers, or LA, or Minneapolis, or you know, Texas, or whatever. And they were really different. And by the time they left, it was like they'd been at summer camp for a weekend, and they banded as a group. And of course, I stay in contact with them in Facebook, and I just love seeing how they have, within their culture of their comedians, have started to support each other, because they were like buddies in their camp here. It's kind of cool.

DeKAY: Do you know an individual by the name of Dennis Collins, and is he or how is he involved?

LORI WILLIAMS: I do, and I worked with him on the Comedy Festival for years. And he is kind of funny all by himself. He's got a real sense of humor, that one. But he's also serious. He's a great guy, and I really enjoyed my time with him. He told me once, the very thing that makes you great can also be your greatest weakness. I will never for-- it was some quote from somebody, but I, I will never forget that.

DeKAY: OK. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

LORI WILLIAMS: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Are there any proponents for this nominee? Opponents? Neutral? OK. With that, that will close our hearings for nominees. We will now move to our first bill, which is LB725, Senator Quick. Welcome, Senator Quick. You're on.

QUICK: All right. Good afternoon, Chairman Holdcroft and members of the General Affairs Committee. My name is Dan Quick, D-a-n Q-u-i-c-k, and I represent District 35, and today I'm introducing LB725. LB725 includes various cleanups to remove ob-- obsolete language in the State Electrical Act and updates the license renewal time period. This bill was developed by the Board of Nebraska State Electrical Division,

and the executive director, Craig Thelen, will be following me to explain more technical details of the cleanup language. We're making a number of revisions to the act to update the language and, and, and processes. These include changing references, references to the Class B electrical contractor and Class B journeyman licenses for low-voltage, clarifying the power requirement for power-limited systems, changing wiring references for fire alarms, which will update them to modern practices and remove obsolete 50-volt current references, and updating references of "farm property" to "farmstead." Also, revising the license renewal period in the even years, from October 15 through December 31, with a late renewal from January 1 through March 30, to October 1st through November 30, with a renewal from December 1 through, through December 31. Because of the way the late renewal period starts and extends into the following year, it has left open a loophole, loophole, where people can potentially allow their license to lapse without renewal, which leads them to be able to potentially do electrical work without a license. We're looking to close that loophole and encourage people to renew their licenses prior to it, to it expiring. And the fifth thing we need to-- looking to change is removing a few more references that the State Electrical Division can elaborate on. AM2256 addresses some of the confusion and concerns surrounding the bill's changes. The amendment removes the references to directional boring work found on page 13, Section 12, as well as clarifies the language related to the timing of the electrical license renewal process on page 10, and adds language on page 4, subsection (15), to clarify they require all-- that-- clar-- clarify that all corridors, clubhouses, and garages be wired by a journeyman in any multi-family apartment, multi-use building. Thank you for your time and attention, and I'm happy to try to answer any questions you might have. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Senator Quick. Questions from the committee? I assume you'll be here for close?

QUICK: Oh yeah, I'll stay.

HOLDCROFT: First proponent. Welcome.

CRAIG THELEN: Thank you, Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Craig Thelen, C-r-a-i-g T-h-e-l-e-n. I'm the director for the State of Nebraska Electrical Division. The State Electrical Board requests that LB725 be moved forward. The State Electrical Board consists of electricians, engineers, electrical inspectors, and representatives on local utilities. This bill is merely a cleanup bill

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to our State Act. So a few of the areas of attention are the clarification on the fire alarm license holders, to allow wiring after the first overcurrent device instead of defining it by 50 volts or less. The 50 volts is an old rating and does not apply to the current installations on fire alarm systems. It also clarifies the language for the residential journeyman and electrician on the level of work they can perform. So residential dwelling units is not to exceed a four-family dwelling unit. If it is a larger complex, clarity allows an RW to wire the living unit, but where commercial wiring methods apply, a journeyman would be required to do this work. For example, the clubhouse, parking facilities. Another point of cleanup on the State Act is reissuing of the Class B electrical contractor and Class B journeyman licenses to allow a pathway for power-limited electrical systems, and it clarifies the power requirements for the power-limited systems. So low-voltage work not to exceed 100 volts and 1,000 volt-amps in a commercial or industrial installation. There's clarification language from "farm property" to "farmstead," changes to the license renewal period in the even years, from October 15 to December 31, with a late renewal from January 1 through March 30, 30 to October-- Novemb-- sorry-- with a late renewal from January 1 through March 30 is currently how it's set up. Well, we want to change it to say, October 1 through November 30, with late renewal from December 1 to December 31, since Statute 81-2108 states that no person shall, for another, wire for, for or install wiring apparatus or equipment unless they are licensed. And the way the language is written now, the late renewal would allow them to work potentially for about 3 months without a license, which goes against that statute. So that was a cleanup for that one. There's also cleanup language that removes the language for permitting jobs longer than 6 months and charging a prorated fee, which we have not-- we've never done that. Adds language for additional charges that may incur over initial application for inspections, like for example, branch circuits or feeders that were not calculated when they initially filed the permit for the electrical work. Directional boring was in the initial act to stay that clean up, but we have an amendment to take that out. I think there was some confusion about what the changes included. The changes we had were actually just going to address the electrical contractors that have a boring crew that may be required--

That's your time, sir.

--to use a licensed electrician to do the work.

Can you, can you wrap it up for us?

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Yep. I'm just about done.

OK.

So, so that change-- so we're not going to change anything with the initial boring companies that were doing the work. So in summary, the State Electrical Division requests that LB725 be moved forward. Thank you for your time.

HOLDCROFT: OK. Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here. I'm just curious about-- I'm trying to find this part about the farmstead versus farm property.

CRAIG THELEN: I think it's more just a clarification. And it's on-- let me see which page that is on.

J. CAVANAUGH: Page 11 of the original bill.

CRAIG THELEN: Yes. Page 11, line item 9, farmstead, to change it to say farmstead instead of farm property. It, it comes up all the time. They try to understand what they, what they mean by farmstead or farm property, and a lot of our language in our State Act for Touristhood has farm property-- or farmsteäd, instead of farm property.

J. CAVANAUGH: So this is just harmonizing with the rest of the statute?

CRAIG THELEN: Yep.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. Thanks.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions for this testifier? I have, I have one. The question always comes up. How much more does this raise the cost of a new house? This change?

CRAIG THELEN: This doesn't change anything. Alls it does is clarifies like the residential wiremen. It clarifies what their scope of work is-- is a residential wireman is cer-- is trained using Romex, which is a residential wiring method. And technically, in the commercial side of it, they're not trained on the running conduit, which is a commercial application. Though it should not change the cost, in my opinion.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions, then? Thank you very much, Mr. Thelen. Next proponent testifying for LB725. Opponents? Welcome.

JUSTIN BRADY: Senator Holdcroft and members of the committee, my name is Justin Brady, J-u-s-t-i-n B-r-a-d-y. I appear before you today as the registered lobbyist for the Home Builders Association of Lincoln, the Metro Omaha Builders Association, the Nebraska State Home Builders Association, and the Nebraska Realtors Association in opposition to how LB725 is currently drafted. I want to thank Senator Quick and Craig with the Electrical Board. They've been working on us-- with us on an amendment, the amendment that was, I believe, was handed out to you. It's almost there, but not quite, and so that's why we're still, we're still in discussions, but we're to a point yet that we can't say yes to it, and it really focuses on that language of the amendment, on page 3, lines 23 through 26. And as Craig said, you know, the idea is if you take a residential journeyman, that if it's 4 units or less, they can do the whole house. That's what they currently are doing. If it goes above 4, they can do the residential area. Fine. That's what it says here. The part that's--there's still discrepancy is the word on line 26 of corridors. What is defined as a corridor. You heard Craig talk about Romex, the, the electrical wire stuff that residential journeymen can pull. There are units that you can, you can do that with. They're currently-- one electrician I spoke to was doing a 100-unit multifamily unit apartment, and by code, was allowed to do that. This would seem to say all of a sudden, you have to stop that and bring in a different journeyman to pull that wire. So it's truly trying to define what a corridor is, that it's really--the discrepancy really is, as I understand it, some say that it's open to the public and therefore has a standard here. The builders would say that's the hallway to someone's apartment. It's really not a place that public gathers, and so we're working with them. We're trying to come up with language. But as of right now, we aren't quite there yet. So with that, I'll try to answer any questions, Senator.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Brady. Any questions from the committee? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman. Well, I'm, I'm curious. Such a-- that small-- seems like a small part. So the, the, the idea is that you have to have a different journeyman for congregating areas.

JUSTIN BRADY: Yes, because that would be a-- as I understand it, in a commercial level. And now, you're going to quickly go way above my pay grade, Senator, but I'll try not to get in trouble. A lot of it, if it

has to-- if there's conduit that has to be put and then you pull wire through it, that is designed or set more where it moves over to the commercial side. That scenario is, you know, where you're going to have a lot of, you know, either clubhouses, or if there's wet-- any sort of wet area, that's, that's run through conduit. If it's inside your apartment when I say multifamily unit, that's really-- I mean-- or what we would say is if it is going down the hallway of the apartment, that's-- if the code is going to allow it or however it was engineered is going allow it, why can't we have the same person, the same residential journeyman pull that wire down the corridor? But if all of a sudden, you get to a different building, where the code and the specs require it to be the conduit, we're OK with it then being a commercial. And I think that's just where we have to have the language, and you heard Craig, in his testimony, talk about if there's a requirement of commercial wiring. I think basically that's the language we're going to need to add there, just to clarify for the work corridor.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. So it's just the-- not the corridor in, in an apartment itself, but when you have 10 apartments on a floor going to a stairwell or something like that, you're talking about that--

JUSTIN BRADY: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: That hallway.

JUSTIN BRADY: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. Thanks.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Real quick. So could a-- like, a journeyman from the commercial side of it, can they wire a residential or [INAUDIBLE], and it wouldn't be that way vice versa. Right?

JUSTIN BRADY: Correct. As I understand it, the commercial could do the residential wiring a lot of times, not always, but a lot of times. There's a additional cost because of that. But no, the residential journeyman can't go do the commercial side.

DeKAY: OK. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Thank you, Mr. Brady.

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JUSTIN BRADY: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other opponents?

KENT ROGERT: Good afternoon. Senator Holdcroft, members of the General Affairs Committee. My name is Kent Rogert, K-e-n-t R-o-g-e-r-t, and I'm here today-- I'm representing the Associated Builders and Contractors in Nebraska and South Dakota. And we're in opposition to the written copy of LB725, but we are thankful for Senator Quick willing to work with us. AM2256 gets us most of the way there. It takes out Section 12, and it fixes the issues we were talking-- Mr. Brady was just talking about ahead of me. So I don't really have anything additional to add, but I can answer any questions if you have any.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Rogert. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much.

KENT ROGERT: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Next opponent, opponent. Anyone testifying in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we'll call up Senator Quick, to close. And as he comes up, there were no proponents, 6 opponents, and 1 neutral letters received. OK.

QUICK: All right. All right. Thank you, Sen-- or Chairman Holdcroft and members of the committee. And as you, you have heard from some of the opponents, we've been working with them to try to get that language just right. We were hoping that that last amendment would kind of fix some of those things, but we're still working with them to try to get that corrected. I think the licensing piece is the biggest piece of that, to try to get that right because we've got-- currently, there are, at times, where maybe someone has let that license lap [SIC], and so for 3 months, they're actually pulling wiring, doing-- working under no license, so we got to get that corrected. So I'm hoping we can get some of these other things worked out with that, you know like building a fourplex or a multifamily unit and making sure that we're-- you know, we're working with the residential side and the commercial side, to make sure we can get that all done properly, properly. So I'm hoping we can get that fixed, and then hopefully get this out and, and at least get that licensing piece really fixed up. So thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Senator Quick. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. That closes our hearing on LB725. Next up is LB1120, with Senator Hansen. Welcome, Senator Hansen.

HANSEN: Thank you, my second to last bill I'm ever going to introduce, so. How privileged you all are. All right. Good afternoon, Chairman Holdcroft and members of the General Affairs Committee. My name is Ben Hansen. That's B-e-n H-a-n-s-e-n, and I represent Legislative District 16. I'm here today to present LB1120, a bill that would support the philanthropic efforts of our VFW and American Legion posts throughout the state. Nebraska is proud of its tight-knit Midwestern communities and the values that inspire family and friends to pour into and support each other locally. Within these communities are various organizations and groups that mobilize volunteers, provide gathering places for social connection, and preserve the traditions that strengthen civic patriotism and honor service members. They often bring people together to fund different projects: disaster relief, school activities, scholarships, and other charitable endeavors. You will, you will hear from some of these groups today. These fundraising efforts are opportunities for whole towns to come together and build their community. One way to fundraise is through bingo or raffle games when organizations register with the state. Rules and regulations for these games are set by statute and under the direction of the Department of Revenue. The percentage of proceeds, the type of games, and the kinds of prizes are spelled out in detail. Currently, progressive jackpots with multiple drawing dates that are required for games like Queen of Hearts are not permissible. I believe the department will be speaking today as, as to why this is the case. While this is an intentional regulation, many other states see great benefits when groups like the VFW and American Legion are able to run games like Queen of Hearts. For instance, one online comment came from VFW post in Illinois. Since running the game at their post, they have been able to donate over \$3.4 million back into their community. They started veteran food pantries, supported local canine training centers that provide dogs for veterans with disabilities, donated to their local high school for band equipment, maintain the local baseball diamonds, and started a program for children of underprivileged families to supply snacks at school. They also helped purchase new fire hoods for the fire department and uniforms for police officers that had just graduated from the academy. In Nebraska, these same groups are equally focused on local efforts but limited in how they raise the money. Like our neighboring states, they would like to expand their possibilities for investing in their community. LB1120

permits for licensed organizations in Nebraska to conduct games like the Queen of Hearts, if they register each game with the department. The language requires that the rules to the game are posted in a visible location where the tickets are being sold to maintain accountability and transparency. Vending or dispensing devices can also be used if they would like it to be more workable for the communities. These games will be included in both the Nebraska Lottery and Raffle Act and the Small Lottery and Raffle Act, acknowledging that the rewards have the potential to be quite substantial. The percentage of prize that is to be allowed to the winner is also defined differently with LB1120. Because Queen of Hearts is to be used as a fundraiser, only 50% of the proceeds are required to be awarded to the winners, while the rest is used to cover costs and financial-- and finance local charities. There will be testimony following me that highlights the heart, the heart behind this legislation. Their experience and expertise have been the driving factor for providing another avenue for community-based philanthropy. With that, I welcome any questions you may have, and ask that you support LB1120. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Sen-- Senator Hansen. Any questions? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Yes, thank you. Senator Hansen, I, I read through here and it references Queen of Hearts all the time. What does that mean?

HANSEN: I could, I could answer that, but the people behind me would better be able to describe the game, specifically what it is.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah. Thank you, Chairman. Does this allow for-- so you could have other games, you would just have to name them later, or does it have to define every game that is allowed?

HANSEN: I believe they have to define what the game specifically is, they just use Queen of Hearts as an example in the statute, but it says not limited to.

QUICK: OK. All right.

HANSEN: It's mainly because that's kind of the heart of the legislation, and primarily what it's going to be used for.

QUICK: Yeah. OK.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Senator Hansen, for being here. We've heard other bills talking about actually automating some of the, the lottery sales and all that. And they talk about specifically, how they have the security and the checks and balances between ages, to make sure that only people that are old enough to play-- I, I see part in here is to-- it talks about-- through vending and dispensing devices, which I think you mentioned.

HANSEN: Mm-hmm.

ANDERSEN: Page 6. Are there provisions in here to ensure that only people that are old enough actually can participate and that, that any winnings they would have would be cross-checked with their driver's license and all that?

HANSEN: Now, I can, I can be pretty sure in how I answer this, but I'm pretty sure if there are going to be any kind of dispensing devices for any kind of tickets or raffles, you know, that the age does have to be verified. If somebody can't answer that behind me, I'll answer it in my closing, just to make sure.

ANDERSEN: There's a head noggling.

HANSEN: OK. There you go.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. So 100% of the proceeds stay within the VFWs and stuff, 50% goes out to winnings, and 50%, goes to--

HANSEN: Yes. We-- yeah, we specifically set it in statute. But we just don't want to, you know-- you don't want to award the winner-- since it is a charitable event, they're just trying to make sure they put it in statute how much can be awarded, so it doesn't go kind of crazy and you're giving somebody a whole bunch of money. Right? So.

DeKAY: OK. Well I was just curious, like at-- in other venues, like with horse racing and stuff that's going on, if there's 10% that goes here, there, and part of it goes to the state coffers or not, so that's what I just wanting to--

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HANSEN: Yep. Yeah, that's probably because that's probably a taxable event-type thing. This is more used for charity.

DeKAY: All right. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions for Senator Hansen? Seeing none, I assume you'll be here for closing?

HANSEN: I have another bill up, but it's not going to be for a while yet, so yes, I will be, I'm sure.

HOLDCROFT: First proponent. Welcome.

RUSS COOK: Thank you. Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Holdcroft, and the members of the General Affairs Committee for hearing me today. I am Russ Cook, R-u-s-s C-o-o-k, commander of American Legion Post 154 in Blair, Nebraska. I'm here today to talk to you about our military veterans and how organizations like the American Legion are important to our veterans as well as our community. When U.S. military veterans return home, the uniform comes off, but the challenges don't. Many encounter obstacles to health care, jobs, mental health support, and connecting with others who relate to their, their experiences. For over a century, the American Legion and other veterans organizations alike, have been a lifeline for veterans and their families. At the national level, the organization advocates for veterans benefits, better health care access, and fair policies. But what truly changes lives happen at the local level, right in our neighborhoods. Local posts provide real, tangible support-- things like help filing for VA claims, rides to medical appointments, emergency financial assistance, job networking, and a safe place for veterans to connect with people who understand. That sense of belonging is powerful. Isolation is a major issue for many veterans, especially those dealing with PTSD, physical injuries, or the difficult trans-- transition to civilian life. Walking into a Legion post can mean walking into a community that offers dignity, purpose, and understanding. For some veterans, it's the difference between struggling alone and finding a support system. But here's the part we don't talk about enough. These local posts are under serious financial pressure. Local American Legion posts are responsible for their own buildings, utilities, insurance, maintenance and charitable events. Rising costs, such as rent, electricity, repairs, food for events, and accessibility hit hard. Many posts rely on donations, small fund raisings, and volunteer labor just to keep the doors open. When the costs rise, something has to give. Sometimes that means fewer community programs, fewer outreach

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events for veterans, fewer resources for families. In worst cases, posts have to close. When the posts close, it ripples outwards. Veterans lose a place for help, communities lose volunteers who support local events, youth programs, and a disaster response, and the connection between service members and civilians grow weaker. So when we talk about supporting veterans, it's not just about saying thank you for your service. It's about supporting the organization that support them, especially at the local level. That's why I feel it is imperative that organizations such as this keep striving to bring members of the community through its doors. And I would thank the committee for listening to me today.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Cook. Questions for this testifier? Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Thank you for being here today.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

DeKAY: With what you guys do raising money here, statewide, do you have any idea what percentage of that comes to cover the cost of the programs you're trying to work with and implement?

RUSS COOK: I don't have any raw numbers for you like that. But different events that we hold-- that require different costs for materials, food, things like that.

DeKAY: Well, like in, say, the Blair area, where you're from, is-- you-- able to help as many people as much as you can with the events that you're holding now, or, or are you up against it financially all the time that way?

RUSS COOK: I guess the answer to that would be financially, we are struggling. Some of the members, to include the one sitting behind me today, have donated their own money, just so some of our programs can, can keep going. And we're talking about little things, like a \$500 scholarship to the Blair High School that we do every year. We were a little short, so, so we, we, we had to figure it out, and we got it figured out. But, but we are constantly coming up against things like that.

DeKAY: I appreciate it, and appreciate your efforts. Thank you.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

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HOLDCROFT: Senator, Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Cook, for being here. Just so you know, there's 3 retirees on this committee.

RUSS COOK: That's fantastic.

ANDERSEN: So we, we do understand. I don't speak for them. I understand. I'm actually a member of American Legion Post 216 out in Gretna, so I get it. I know it's a continual battle sometimes, because of the ebbs and flows of your membership time-- sometimes, it goes up, sometimes it goes down at different reasons.

RUSS COOK: Correct.

ANDERSEN: Do you have any idea-- and this is kind of touching on what Senator Dekay was asking, to a certain extent. Do you have an idea of the order or magnitude of revenue that would be brought in for the post should this be approved? Any idea-- is there, is there a precedent, is there another state that's done this, that the post says, hey, our revenue has gone up 150%, because of this kind of gaming?

RUSS COOK: So, so, again, personally, I don't have any numbers for that. I do know that posts in other states have, have made a good amount of money from, from a fundraiser like this. Because like Senator Hansen had to mention, I heard about the donating of police officers' uniforms. I'm also a police officer, so I took notice of that, and, and I've learned of those other things. But as far as an actual number, I , I don't have any numbers like that for you.

ANDERSEN: All right. I'd be very curious. The other thing I'd ask is-- and I kind of already alluded to it, is the participation in the post, whether that's VFW, American Legion, all similar, right, and have the similar ebbs and flows of participation. Is it, is it your belief that if this bill is approved, that your participation in, in your post would increase-- give them another reason to come in, besides the camaraderie and the cheap beer?

RUSS COOK: Yes, sir. I think it would. I think that, that having a game like this would, would be a draw to the community that, that they would come in, they would have fun with other members of the community. I think that while they are there, for either the drawing or to purchase a ticket from themselves-- while they are there, they are purchasing things such as drinks, or if we happen to be selling

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food at that point, maybe they're selling food, or maybe they-- while they are there, they are there, they see our poster that-- like, for example, we are taking donations for the Blair Legion baseball team. Maybe they donate an extra \$20 for things like that, or some of the school events we do, or, or things like that. One of the things we're trying to do here is to get people through the doors to--

ANDERSEN: Yeah. Agreed.

RUSS COOK: --to help all of it.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Thanks for being here. Looking at the 20 proponents, and you're like 20 for 20 from Blair, so you guys are doing a good job. So, no, just-- thank you for being here and just sharing.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Quick.

CLOUSE: I know how tough it is [INAUDIBLE].

HOLDCROFT: Oh, sorry.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Quick.

QUICK: Yeah. Thank you, Chairman. And thank you for your service-- and all of you, by the way. Thank you for your service.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

QUICK: So I'm stealing Senator Clouse's question about the Queen of Hearts and how that-- can you talk a little bit about how that game works or what that--

RUSS COOK: So I can talk a little bit. However my colleague, Don Sorensen, can tell you all about it.

QUICK: OK. All right. Thank you.

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HOLDCROFT: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much.

RUSS COOK: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Next proponent. Welcome.

DON SORENSEN: Thank you. Thank you, everyone, for, for having us today. My name is Don Sorensen, D-o-n S-o-r-e-n-s-e-n, and I am the treasurer for the Sons of the American Legion Post 154 in Blair. And I'm here to help, help you understand and explain the Queen of Hearts game and how it would be conducted at, at our post as a charitable fundraiser for our Legion. The game board consists of 54 cards, which is the main focal point-- the deck of cards plus 2 jokers. They are inserted into small envelopes, and those envelopes are sealed. And then once those are sealed, we will shuffle them up, and then we will number them 1 through 54. Once they are numbered, then we will place them in sleeves in a board specifically made for the Queen of Hearts, and then the game would begin. That board, that board, then, is locked to ensure that we, we have integrity for the game. Each week, raffle tickets that are made available to the public for a donation for the next week's game. For example, a donation of \$1 per ticket or 6 tickets for \$5, those are options that are available. And then once a week, for instance, on a, a Friday night at 6:00, we would have drawing. The owner of this ticket is eligible to draw one of the cards available on the board. If the Queen of Hearts is drawn, the owner of that ticket would receive one-half of the ticket donations. If the Queen of Hearts is not drawn, that card is placed face up on the board and the game continues on for the next week. The ticket owner does not need to be-- they do not need be present for this drawing. They have the option of picking a card, but notating on their ticket the number of the card that has been placed in that envelope, they have that option to put that on that envelope. All, all tickets from the previous week's donations are destroyed, and then a new week of ticket donations will be available for the next week's drawing. The purpose of this game is to bring new people into our Legion and to help support our post. Our Legion is open to the public, and this support will allow us to make upgrades and enhancements to our current facility, as "wellings"-- as well as supporting the various programs our post offers, which Russ has alluded to. It also brings support to our most valued members: our veterans. And along with those veterans, our members of the Women's Auxiliary, as well as members of the Sons of the American Legion, we will continue to provide support to make our, our community as a whole a better place, so thank you.

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HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Sorenson. Questions for this testifier?
Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here, Mr. Sorensen. So just so I understand, so there's 54 potential games on the board, and then everybody gets a raffle ticket. And if my raffle ticket get gets drawn out of the 1,000 raffle tickets that are sold, I just get to pick either number 1 through 54?

DON SORENSEN: That's correct.

J. CAVANAUGH: And then if that doesn't come up, then that \$1,000 goes into the pot. And then next week--

DON SORENSEN: That is correct.

J. CAVANAUGH: So OK. So that's how you get, I saw in this example, \$7.1 million in that [INAUDIBLE].

DON SORENSEN: Well, that would be, that would be fantastic, but.

J. CAVANAUGH: I suppose if you get to, if you get to week 54, everybody knows the winner is going to get a substantial pot.

DON SORENSEN: Correct.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. Thanks.

DON SORENSEN: Yes.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you. Can you have multiple games going at once?

HOLDCROFT: No, we just have the one going.

CLOUSE: Just the one.

DON SORENSEN: Just the one. And then, and then, it would, it would stop and start. Once Friday comes, then, then the next week would start.

CLOUSE: OK.

DON SORENSEN: Yep.

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HOLDCROFT: Other questions? Thank you very much.

DON SORENSEN: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Next testif-- proponent. Next proponent. Welcome.

JIM SANDVOLD: Thank you, Chairman and members of the General Affairs Committee, for hearing me today. Special thanks to Senator Ben Hansen, for introducing this bill and being our Senator from the 16th District. My name is Jim Sandvold, J-i-m S-a-n-d-v-o-l-d. I am the adjutant of the Sons of the American Legion Squadron in Blair, Nebraska. Today, you've heard how the Queen of Hearts Charitable Raffle is run and what the Legion is about. I am here to tell you the benefits to our Legion Post and the benefits to our community. The American Legion is a congressionally chartered, nonpartisan, patriotic organization founded in 1919 to serve veterans, mentor youth, promote responsible citizenship, and advocate for the strong national security. Its primary purpose is to advocate for veterans' benefits, support military families, and strengthen communities, often summarized by its four pillars of: veterans' affairs and rehabilitation, national security, Americanism, and children and youth. We feel that the Queen of Hearts Charitable Raffle will bring more people to our Legion. This added revenue will make our Legion more sustainable by helping us pay the monthly bills like insurance, utilities, and wages of our employees. It will help us with future expenses of building maintenance, upgrades and improvements such as ADA handicap bathrooms, a new furnace, and a refresh of existing spaces that serve our veterans and our community. We are a service organization, and this increased revenue will help us to support veteran causes, such as: Gifts for Yanks that Gave, Veterans Affairs and Rehabilitation, the Legion Child Wellbeing Foundation, the American Legion Boys and Girls State Programs, American Legion Baseball Program, Veterans Homes, the Disabled American Veterans van network, and many others. We also support our local community with four scholarships to local high school seniors going to a two- or a four-year college or vocational school. We donate to our local volunteer fire department, the National Fire Safety Council, our post prom program, our fifth grade Flag Education Day in Blair School System. We donate flags for the Blair Little League, the Blair Youth Sports Complex, and the Blair Cemetery, as well as many others. We feel that the added revenue will not only help support our Legion post, but would also provide us with the ability to support our veterans' services and our community in many ways with more dollars.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Mr. San-- sorry. Sandvold. Sandvold? Sandvold.

JIM SANDVOLD: Yes.

HOLDCROFT: Any questions for this testifier? Yes, Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thanks so much, Chairman Holdcroft. And thank you so much, Mr. Sandvold, for being here. Just listening to you, it's probably a question that I would have asked the treasurer, but just looking at all the things that you support, it must be a pretty substantial budget.

JIM SANDVOLD: Yes. So our Legion, we track our volunteer hours. With our Sons of the American Legion and our Legion, we roll, roll over at 10,000 volunteer hours a year. We, we struggle with finding the funds to, to do all these different charitable things and to run our, run our Legion. We, we hold Rib Fest. We had a wild game feed just recently. We do a bingo night. We have a gun raffle. We do lots of different smaller events. We got one coming up. We have our corned beef and cabbage. And all these things add up. And, you know, we do pretty well, as far as getting our Legion to run. But to do the extra things that we want to do, it's a struggle to find the funds to get to them, so we feel that this would definitely benefit.

ROUNTREE: All right. Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions for this testifier? Seeing none, thank you very much. Next proponent. Welcome.

JEFFREY BAKER: Good afternoon, Chairman Holdcroft and members of the General Affairs Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. My name is Jeffrey Baker, J-e-f-f-r-e-y B-a-k-e-r, and I'm here on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Nebraska, in support of LB1120. LB1120 is a simple and practical bill with a very meaningful impact. It gives licensed, community organizations, including our veteran service organizations, the ability to conduct these kinds of raffles and lottery-style fundraisers that are already standard across much of the country. These games allow for the progressive jackpots, multiple drawing dates, and modern ticket sales methods, all under the oversight of the Nebraska Department of Revenue. The bill's goal is clear: to strengthen local community efforts. From a veteran's perspective, that goal could not be more timely or important. Across Nebraska, small town posts and nonprofit organizations are struggling to keep up with rising costs, aging

buildings, and increased demand for services, all while traditional fundraising methods are becoming less effective. But in other states, these updated raffle formats have provided a lifeline. They bring people together, draw families into local establishments, and create sustainable, community-driven fundraising that supports real local needs. For the VFW, these funds translate directly into action-veterans assistance programs, community grants, youth scholarships, and keeping posts alive in rural communities where they are often one of the last remaining gathering places. LB1120 also keeps strong accountability in place. Every game must be registered with the Department of Revenue, rules must be publicly posted, and organizations must still direct proceeds to their charitable mission. The bill simply modernizes outdated statutory language so community groups can utilize tools that have already proven successful and safe in other states. This is-- this isn't an expansion of gambling, this is an expansion of opportunity: an opportunity for community organizations to stay viable, an opportunity to support veterans and their families, and an opportunity to bring people together in a way that strengthens the social fabric of our communities. Nebraska has always prided itself on local community involvement. LB1120 reinforces that tradition by giving our organizations the flexibility they need to thrive in today's world. For this reason, on behalf of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Department of Nebraska, I respectfully urge the committee to advance LB1120. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Mr. Baker. Questions for this testifier? Seeing none, thank you very much.

JEFFREY BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HOLDCROFT: Next proponent. Welcome.

DOUG OBAL: Thank you, Chairman and General Coun-- General Affairs Committee, for having me here today I might be the guy that you guys want to start throwing questions at. I first serve--

HOLDCROFT: Can I ask you to spell your name for us?

DOUG OBAL: Oh, I'm sorry. My name is Doug Obal, D-o-u-g O-b-a-l, and I'm here, of course, representing nonprofit organizations throughout Nebraska, and I come from Technique Manufacturing, which we're a manufacturer of a raffle ticket machine. And so over the past 27 years, I've been directly and indirectly involved with many nonprofit

organizations and their fundraising efforts. Primarily, up until the last 10 years, that first 17 years was pull tabs. I know you're probably all familiar with pull tabs, a lot of the pull tab machines that you see in Nebraska are ours that we manufacture. And about 10 years ago, we had an organization in Indiana-- it was actually a licensed distributor in Indiana, came to us and said, hey listen, we're having volunteer problems. And the volunteer problems were to run this progressive raffle. And the reason that they were having trouble is because it got to be pretty burden-- burdensome, you know, selling the tickets, keeping track of the funds, keeping records of the revenues, and, and that, and that sort of thing. So we decided to design a machine that would help them do that. And respectively, over the, over the last 10 years, 95% of the organizations that I've dealt with, have, have been with veterans organizations, which is one of the reasons why we, we keep doing this and we're really pushing [INAUDIBLE]. Right now, we've, we've been in 16 different states. And right now, I'm working with Arizona and Nebraska, of course, to see what we can do to help these nonprofit, primarily veteran organizations in their fundraising. Because as has been testified, there's been some issues or trouble keeping these funds going in order to stay in business, more or less. And if you look at some of these progressive raffles that have been ran in other states, it's, it's quite amazing what this particular raffle is doing. The proceeds that you get out of the raffle or the revenue really depends on three things: one, what are the state regulations and what, what can they do in this raffle; two, how they run the raffle; and three, how big of an organization they are. The larger organizations that I've seen do, you know, jackpots in the hundreds of thousand dollars, a million, are fairly good-size memberships or, or larger organizations. The smaller organizations with less memberships are still doing quite well with it, but they're not at those astounding numbers that you see or hear of. The one Senator Hansen referred to in his opening, I dealt with them from day one on their, on their raffle, and, and they've done quite well. They've, they've built buildings and parking lots, and have done scholarships of \$10,000 plus, and so the stuff they're doing with it is tremendous.

OK.

But at this time, if you--.

That's your time.

Throw questions.

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HOLDCROFT: OK. Are there questions for this testifier? Seeing none, thank you very much.

DOUG OBAL: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Proponent, any other proponents? Opponents? Neutral testifiers? Welcome.

BRIAN ROCKEY: Good afternoon, Chairman Holdcroft and members of the General Affairs Committee. I'm Brian Rockey, B-r-i-a-n R-o-c-k-e-y, and I serve as the director of the Nebraska Lottery and Charitable Gaming Division of the Department of Revenue. I'm here in a neutral capacity on LB1120. I want to provide a little context throughout this. Gambling as a baseline activity in Nebraska has always been illegal. Carveouts have been-- have existed for certain activities to be conducted by only certain entities. So for example, 4-411 defines lottery. 9-415 defines raffle. 9-431 defines lottery, raffle, and ticket stub requirements. There are a variety of specifics that are covered in statute, as well as in the regulations. Lottery-- charitable gaming regulations speak to the construction of raffle tickets in, in the manner in which raffles have to be conducted. Although we've had some various inquiries regarding the prospect of the Queen of Hearts concept over the last couple of years, what we've had to do is explain why that doesn't fit neatly into any of the boxes that, that describe our regulatory framework under Nebraska law. I'd be happy to answer questions. I want to provide just a couple of reference points. Last year, there were 396 raffle licenses issued by the division. The tax on raffle lottery/raffle proceeds is 2% of gross. So last year, that amounted to \$136,000 on \$6.7 million in total sales. And certainly, the, the testimony of the proponents, the-- this particular style of raffle wouldn't be limited to a particular type of organization, but any, any organization that would qualify for a license could conduct that. And Senator Andersen, I think you had asked the question earlier about age. And I think it was referenced that the sale of the ticket would be one point where the age control could take place, and then whether or not there are vending machines allowed, and that would probably be something else. I'd be happy to answer questions.

HOLDCROFT: Questions for Mr. Rockey? I have one. If we pass this legislation, how big a deal is it, then, for the Charitable Gaming Division to put together the rules, regulations, licensing?

BRIAN ROCKEY: It wouldn't be overly large. We've, we've ha-- like I said, Senator, we've had some information for a period of time on that, and I think we could look to examples from other jurisdictions of what they've done. So it wouldn't be a, a particularly heavy lift.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you, Mr. Rockey. Appreciate it.

BRIAN ROCKEY: Thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Neutral testifiers? Any other neutral testifiers? Then Senator Hansen, to close. And as you come up, there were 20 proponents, 2 opponents, and 2 neutral letters received.

HANSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, and I-- there, there was 2 opponent letters, and I think-- when I, when I read the opponent letters, they were short, but I think they kind of misconstrued, like-- and misunderstanding about what the bill was. And one of them even referred to this, since it has the term progressive in it, is like speaking in code for hard left extremism. So, I think that they were a little off on what the bill actually did. I appreciate them commenting, but it's maybe a little bit different than what their opposition was on-- online. So I appreciate everybody coming and testifying behind me. And as many of you know, and I do, too, that this is a great organization of guys and gals, who really put the time and effort in to supporting the community, and I know that's what a lot of us encourage. And just to clarify that this would be under the direction of the department and subject to the rules and regulations of both the Raffle Acts. I think Senator Andersen maybe had a question about that, about how this would be with maybe some of the tickets and raffles, how they'd be sold. And they still have to be under those certain regulations. And just for some clarity that we do-- most of our surrounding states do allow for this, actually. South Dakota American Legion, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, to some extent, Illinois-- you saw some of the information they sold, so nothing, nothing new that we're doing here. We're just kind of hoping to clarify this in statute, so it allows these guys to do some of these charities. And this does have a little bit of a trickle-down effect, right. This goes to the-- like, this was mentioned in previous testimony. It is for our posts, but then also is Auxiliary, Sons, Sons of the American Legion, and ultimately, our community, so. And this isn't-- as much as I appreciate Blair coming out in, in force-- this is really good-- this is every one of our communities. Each one of our districts have VFWs, American Legions, who could possibly benefit from

this and help each one of our communities, so I just want to make sure that we're all aware of that, as well. And they do have a great Rib Fest and corned beef and cabbage coming up, I'm looking forward to, it's amazing. And I do appreciate Director Rockey come out and clarifying some of the regulatory framework. And he mentioned licensed organization, which are nonprofit organizations defined in st-- defined in the Raffle Acts, so. With that, I'll take any questions best that I can, and I encourage everybody to hopefully vote on this quickly, because I think we do have a pathway forward for this on the floor. So this will help out our organizations right away, which they actually are in dire need of this, some, some of them in our very own communities.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you, Senator Hansen. Questions? Oh, over here. Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Is there any limit to the amount of raffle tickets a person pur-- purchase per week or not?

HANSEN: I don't think in our statute there is. Now there might be in some of the rules and regs of the acts. I would assume there's, there's, there's some framework around that, but I can't tell you right now.

DeKAY: I was just curious, if you get down to week 54, how big a basket you would need to mix up the numbers.

HANSEN: If they're willing to do it, I mean, it all goes back-- most of it goes back to the community. So, I mean, you know, like--

Exactly.

I was going to say, it's not a bad thing, but.

DeKAY: No, thank you.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Andersen..

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Senator Hansen, for being here. The context of this bill is designed mostly against-- tailored towards the, the veteran organizations and nonprofits and all that stuff. Would this also be applicable for, say, like the Catholic Church? They-- typically, in the summers, they have a festival, and it's a major fundraiser used for those same reasons, right, for, for

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pantries, and scholarship funds, and those kinds of things. Would it apply to them as well?

HANSEN: I think so. They would be classified as one of the licensed organizations. I think so. I just looked at that but maybe like also, your fire hall, or something like that, too. But the Catholic Church specifically, I'd have to look and see and make sure, but I think so.

ANDERSEN: OK. If it's not, would you be willing to amend it to include them?

HANSEN: I can look and see.

ANDERSEN: Thank you.

HANSEN: I'm going to look and it's on-- if they're on there, first.

ANDERSEN: Thanks.

HOLDCROFT: Other questions for Senator Hansen? OK. Thank you very much.

HANSEN: Thank you, everyone. Appreciate it.

HOLDCROFT: That will close our hearing on LB1120, and our hearings for today.