

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Natural Resources Committee January 29, 2026
Rough Draft

BRANDT: Welcome to the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Tom Brandt from Plymouth, represent the 32nd Legislative District. I serve as Chair of this committee. The committee will take up the bills in the order posted. This public hearing is your opportunity to be part of the legislative process and express your position on the proposed legislation before us. If you're 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. When it is your turn to come forward to testify, give the testifier sheet to the page or to the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify but would like to indicate your position on a bill, there will also be a yellow sign-in sheet back on 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, 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 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 using a five-minute 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 indicates you need to wrap up your final thought and stop. Questions from the committee may follow. Also, committee members may come and go during the hearing. This has nothing to do with the importance of the bill being heard. It is just part of the process as senators may have bells 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 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 8:00 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 the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included on the committee statement. I

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will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting on my right.

JUAREZ: Senator Margo Juarez from Omaha, District 5.

RAYBOULD: Senator Jane Raybould, District 28: central Lincoln.

MOSER: Mike Moser, District 22: Platte County, Stanton County.

DeKAY: Senator Barry DeKay, representing District 40, consisting of Fulton, Knox, Cedar, Antelope County, northern part of Dixon, and northern part of Pierce County.

CONRAD: Good afternoon, I'm Danielle Conrad. I represent north Lincoln.

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

BRANDT: Also assisting the committee today to my right is our legal counsel, Cyndi Lamm. And on my far left is our committee clerk, Sally Schultz. And our pages will now stand and introduce themselves.

TERESA WILSON: Hello, my name is Teresa Wilson, I'm a junior [INAUDIBLE] major from Lincoln, Nebraska.

ESTEN HYDE: Hello, my name is Esten Hyde. I am a business and law major at UNL. And I'm from Auburn, Nebraska.

BRANDT: And with that, we will open today's hearing with Scott Cassels. He is a reappointment to the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. He is a commissioner at large, and he is from Omaha and is, is a retired construction executive. Welcome.

SCOTT CASSELS: Thank you, thank you. It's nice to be here. I apologize, I'll spell my name in a minute, but I've been retired three years and I forgot how to tie my tie. So I'm sorry I didn't wear one. I had to ask my wife to tie it.

BRANDT: It's a nice problem to have, isn't it?

SCOTT CASSELS: Scott Cassels, S-c-o-t-t C-a-s-s-e-l-s. A few minutes on myself. For those that haven't met you, I've had the privilege of married to the same woman for over 40 years. In fact, we're

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celebrating our 40th this year. Two boys, six grandkids, one being a 2-- 2-month-old baby, and the next grandkid is 11. So it's been a long time since we've been around babies. It's fun again. I worked for Kiewit since the mid-70s and retired three years ago. And I've been on the Game at Parks, this is the conclusion of my eighth year, and I'm applying for the third term. And I thank you all for, for allowing three terms to going forward because it's nice to-- it takes a little while to get the experience to, to be able to really participate and make a difference. And, and being a commissioner, this is an exciting job because as coming up through the private sector my, my entire career, I mean that's kind of what we're doing at the commission. We have to eat what we kill. You know, we have provide a product that people want, we have to provide services, we have to provide best in class to get the users to come use us. And as you all know, we're 85% or so funded ourselves, maybe closer to 90. And we've had some exciting times the last 8 years and I love being part of them. And I've had a wide variety of, of commissioners I've worked with. And today I believe the commission is as strong as it's ever been with our diversity of thought and our diversity of experience. Over a couple years ago we, we wrote our playbook to make sure we all understood our respective responsibilities and how to represent the state and the commission. And so that's been wonderful. It's got great stuff in front of us too, which I'll talk about in a minute if you ask some questions. And I also believe our commission, Game and Parks Commission, is as strong as it's been in my entire 8 years. The organization structure and leadership under Tim McCoy and Jim Swenson and Jeff Fields that are here with me today, is, is focused on the right things. And in the future, I would look forward to the next four years, it's filled with new parks, it's full with new access, improving who we serve and how much we serve them and what we offer them. And I hope it's improved with hatching a little more than 60 million fish, because we're working on our hatcheries quite a lot. So there's lots of excitement, and I'd be more than happy to take any questions. It's been a privilege to be part of this for 8 years, and I really look forward to the next 4 years if you all approve my position. Thank you, Senator.

BRANDT: OK, let's see what we've got for questions.

CLOUSE: Thank you--

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BRANDT: Senator.

CLOUSE: --Chairman Brandt. Scott, just kind of a question on, on the Game and Parks Commission, because we see a lot of things on fees and things like that, fees. What, what's your biggest challenges on the Game and Parks Commission, do you think, going forward? Is it cost? Is it new programs? What do you see as some of the biggest challenges?

SCOTT CASSELS: Well, certainly you see most of our bill list that you're working on this time is dealing with fees. We have to, have to reimburse ourselves. We have keep up with our maintenance and all the things we need to do. And we, we look at other organizations and compare to make sure we're not pricing ourselves out of business. But the biggest challenge is, I think, is what our commission has established. You know, the commissioners-- or our Game and Parks runs the business, and we're the stewards over the resources and the assets of the state. And we're there to help those guys [INAUDIBLE]. And that allows us to stand a little bit above the day-to-day business. And we focus on three things, it's in the next four years, we're going to open a central park, which is going to be funded privately. And so we've got to work really hard on that. And we need improve our hatcheries. And why do you say is that so strategic? Well, you'd be surprised, fishing, how big of a draw that is to get people using our parks and then fishing. And then all of a sudden we get them hunting and we got a new user, so. And then the third biggest thing is, is we call it access at the commission, but it's really usership. We've got a wonderful resource. We have to communicate more to more people about it. We have to service more, different diversities of needs. We're improving our, our trail business a lot because all of a sudden everybody wants to ride their bikes and walk and talk. So we have to change with what's going on. But access is, is all-encompassing and it's, it's about using our natural resources as efficient as we can. And the commissioners are all pretty focused on those three things.

CLOUSE: And the central park, that's Grand Island, the old Mormon park?

SCOTT CASSELS: Right.

CLOUSE: Mormon Island.

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SCOTT CASSELS: But, you know, thinking about it, it's about self-funding. You know, it's like we did at Mahoney with the Venture Park. It's, it's a big challenge, but we'll get it. We've got a lot of good support. I think the other thing we'll do is, I believe, working with the foundation is really key to, certainly to central park and key to a lot of things, the foundation is helping us with our hatcheries. So getting that kind of resources and, and looking for new types of funding is a challenge that we're running in.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

BRANDT: Other questions? Quiet group today.

SCOTT CASSELS: Boy.

BRANDT: So this new park is going to be called "Central Park?"

SCOTT CASSELS: No, that's what we're using it for our build up. We haven't named it or anything like that. We're just--

BRANDT: So what does naming rights cost?

SCOTT CASSELS: Well, as we look at funding, I'm sure that's going to be discussed. But we haven't determined that yet.

BRANDT: So is this gonna be like what we've got at Mahoney or what's all gonna be here?

SCOTT CASSELS: Mahoney is a big, big, big park.

BRANDT: Yeah, Mahoney is kind of a big deal.

SCOTT CASSELS: So we think more like a Ponca or, you know, that size park. Our central Nebraska is really underserved with Game-- with the parks. And that's why we have identified it a year and a half ago and got some concepts and discussions going with the city and discussions going with the foundations. So we've got, we got a concept on paper, but we've got a lot of work ahead of us.

BRANDT: OK.

MOSER: Tom.

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BRANDT: Yeah, Senator Moser.

MOSER: Thanks. I apologize for the--

BRANDT: Nope, that's fine.

MOSER: --unprofessional greeting. Where's the new park?

SCOTT CASSELS: We're working on trying to get one in, in Grand Island. We've got the little park there now, and we're working trying to expand, because we just don't have enough capacity to service the need of central Nebraska.

MOSER: OK.

SCOTT CASSELS: And it's, it will be much like Venture Parks, where we're going to be looking for funding from the private sector. So it, it's a concept on paper. And we've been talking it up, and it's gonna-- the next four years, it's going to be the main focus of the commission [INAUDIBLE].

MOSER: OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Senator Juarez.

JUAREZ: So I wanted to ask a question about the public-private partnership Do you really think that that's the way for us to go in the future?

SCOTT CASSELS: I think it should be one of the tools in our tool chest. We, we-- if you think about it, if we can do public-private partnerships of some sort, like we did with Venture Parks, and we sell enough of the product that we're producing, our needs from, from the General Fund are going to become less and less. But General Fund has to be part of the, the, tools in the tool chest. So it's just another, another way to expand our access and expand our usage.

JUAREZ: And do other states in the country, are they going the route of public and private partnerships too, do you know?

SCOTT CASSELS: I don't on Game and Parks, but I do on like the Department of Transportation and stuff like that. They absolutely do that. They bring in the private sector, and whether it's a fee or a, or a reimburseable, where they, the private sector brings the money in

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and then the state reimburses them over time They call that public-private partnership also. But yeah, it's, it's, it's a tool in the tool chest, but it's not, it's about a solution to, to funding park-- a game and park system as good as ours.

JUAREZ: OK, thank you.

SCOTT CASSELS: No problem.

BRANDT: I don't see any more.

SCOTT CASSELS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chairman and everybody else.

BRANDT: See if we have any testifiers. Any proponents? Proponents? Any opponents? Opponents? Anybody in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, there were no online comments, and we will move to our next appointment. Scott, is it Dicke? Dicke, from the Natural-- Nebraska Natural Resources District. Mr. Dicke is from Alma, Nebraska. He has a B.S. in natural resources and a master's of community and regional planning from UNL. He has worked for the Lower Republican Natural Resources District and is currently employed at the Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigations District. Welcome.

SCOTT DICKE: Thank you, Senator. My name is, again, Scott Dicke, S-c-o-t-t D-i-c-k-e. Good I could follow the other Scott, so I could remember how to spell that. But just a little background with my experience and professionally and educationally. I was born and raised in Nebraska, attended Kearney High School, graduated there, went to the University of Nebraska, received a bachelor's B.S. in natural resources from the College of Agriculture. Went on in pursuit of a master's, and during that time I worked for an engineering consulting firm here in, here in Lincoln. And after I received my master's, I stayed with them for 15 years, working in regulatory-- environmental and regulatory compliance, developing projects. That position took me all over the Midwest. Eventually, I transferred with that firm out to Colorado, and I spent nearly, well, seven years working on engineering consulting work in water, energy, natural gas and oil. My wife and I started a family out there and had a son. And during that time we talked and decided that we wanted to move home and raise our, our son back home. And she sacrificed her career and we came back and I took a position, as you mentioned, with the Lower Republican NRD, served as the assistant general manager there. That's probably 300 and-- over

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300,000 acres. There's mostly groundwater, surface water, and there also. Had an opportunity to move up to Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District. I've taken that role as the irrigation and water services manager for the last five years. And so looking at the Natural Resources Commission and their ability to fund water projects through the Water Sustainability Fund was an interest. And coming from 15 years of private side, nearly another 15 years on the public side, I felt I could offer some comparative knowledge, both from the technical and political side, from the surface water or the groundwater side, from the water quality and water quantity side, and would like the opportunity to serve Nebraska in that capacity. Aside from some of that, I also serve on the Nebraska State Irrigation Association and the Nebraska Water Resources Association. The rest of my time is spent watching basketball with my freshman, serving as an ATM and an Uber driver, I think. Hopefully he's got his license now, so we're getting close, so maybe the, the drive is going to pick up for him. With that, I'd take any questions.

BRANDT: All right, let's see what we've got. Questions? Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Scott, thank you for being here. And the Nebraska Natural Resources Commission is one of the best commissions I was ever on. I had a lot of fun. You deal with a lot issues, and I did miss that. But I don't know if you've been on or can answer-- even answer this, but what's been the impact of budget cuts on the Water Sustainability Fund? Have you had much experience with that yet--

SCOTT DICKE: I've had--

CLOUSE: --kind of what you're doing?

SCOTT DICKE: I've had an opportunity to attend one meeting and understand that the funding right now has, has been used in other capacity. So there is less money coming in, but there is still money there for the projects that have been approved.

CLOUSE: Yeah, it was supposed to be at one time \$11 million a year that's appropriated. And now it's \$8 million, and I don't know where it's going.

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SCOTT DICKE: Yeah.

CLOUSE: OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Other questions? I guess you're gonna get off the hook easy today. I will tell you this. It took my daughter four times to get her driver's license. We were on a first-name basis, and in rural Nebraska. In rural Nebraska, it's the same people that go from Fairbury to Beatrice to [INAUDIBLE] and we were at all those places. So I was just kind of throwing that out there for you.

SCOTT DICKE: I, I've tried to get him driving early, you know, hey, let's get out. So hopefully he's in good shape, but I hope he can, hope he can get through it all right.

BRANDT: It's an exciting time. OK, let's see if we have any-- anybody else to testify. Are there any proponents? Any opponents? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Yeah, those guys are laughing back there. There was no online comments. And with that, we're going to close your hearing. Congratulations. And we're gonna move to a bill now.

SCOTT DICKE: Thank you, Senator.

BRANDT: You bet. Thank you.

SCOTT DICKE: Appreciate it.

CONRAD: Thank you all.

BRANDT: Welcome, Senator Dover. And you can begin on LB1127.

DOVER: Thank you, Chairman Brandt, and good afternoon, committee members. For the record, my name is Robert Dover, R-o-b-e-r-t D-o-v-e-r, and I represent District 19, which is Madison County and the south half of Pierce County. The LB1127 is being introduced as a convenient option for Nebraskans who access state park systems, providing an alt-- an optional alternative to the traditional adhesive window shield park permit. The bill was developed in response to a constituent's concerns that the current sticker requirement can be difficult to place correctly and hard to remove. In coordination with Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, the bill authorizes the creation of an annual hang tag park permit that may be transferred between vehicles registered to the same permit holder. The hang tag option

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maintains visibility and compliance requirements for the enforcement purposes while offering a more practical solution for many park users. The legislation does not eliminate existing permits, does not mandate the use of hang tags, and preserves the commission's authority to set fees, designs, and rules through regulation. Ultimately, LB1127 reflects a simple, constituent-driven improvement to the state law that balances convenience for park visitors with the operational needs of Game and Parks and the continued protection of Nebraska State Park System. I'd answer any questions you might have. Yes, Senator Hughes.

BRANDT: Senator Hughes.

HUGHES: You don't get a say.

CLOUSE: It's not your role.

DOVER: Oh, sorry.

HUGHES: Thank you, Chairman Brandt. I'm just kidding. OK, here's my question.

DOVER: Yes.

HUGHES: What prevents me from buying a hang tag and then, oh, hey, Margo, you want to go to the park? Here you go. Here's my hang tag. And hey, Jane, you want to go? Here's me hang tag. Like, I feel like there's gonna be less revenue for Game and Parks if people-- they're gonna cheat.

DOVER: We discussed that. So basically currently, a Nebraska State Park sticker is \$35 and the duplicate is \$17.50. And they're-- actually they can charge a convenient fee that would be no more than \$15. And I agree with what that was a concern we had when we discussed it. But I think that, and they could all speak to it too, but I think there's going to be more sales because of the convenience. They can adjust the price where I think that-- I think it's probably going to have to be a revenue generator for Game and Parks.

HUGHES: So you'd bump up the price of a hang tag versus just the one, the sticker?

DOVER: For convenience and, and so-- and one thing too is so we-- in discussions we think that probably I know I would, I would probably

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purchase a convenient hang tag instead of buying just one for my windshield because I don't want to put it on my windshield. In fact, a gentleman named Walter Haberman called in one morning and he complained about this, and then I'm thinking like, oh, I hate those stickers too. Because like, you try to get a razor blade down--

HUGHES: No, I-- yeah, yeah.

DOVER: And so we-- actually, he wanted a license plate tag put on, and we met with DMV that same day. And they were for that, but the Game and Parks had a concern about it not being visible as you pulled into the booth, and it would be on the back of the vehicle. You would have to see when they went by. And so as a compromise, Game and Parks and, and our, our, I guess our district whatever, came up with this solution But I think you're gonna see a lot of people buy this just because it's easy. But yeah, that's gonna happen just like some people actually use handicap stalls.

HUGHES: I mean, what I like about it is, let's say I go to the park, we go to a park with John's car, and it's like, oh, but the next time we go, we want my car. And it's, like, oh, and I have to buy another, you know? That part is nice. But, OK, I don't know. Thanks.

DOVER: So, yeah, so you're actually, I mean, you're paying really for the sticker and then, then the duplicate, right?

HUGHES: Yeah. OK.

BRANDT: Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: I love that idea, because it depends on which car you want to take and how many people can fit in that particular car to get to the park. Can you talk a little bit about the fiscal note that is presented to us?

DOVER: There won't, won't be a fiscal note because Game and Parks will use it as a revenue generator.

RAYBOULD: OK, because it did, did come with a fiscal note.

DOVER: Oh.

RAYBOULD: Modest expenditure anticipated increase in revenue.

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DOVER: Right.

BRANDT: Yeah, increase in revenue.

HUGHES: So probably you have to print them all first.

RAYBOULD: So the modest increase is just printing?

DOVER: It's going to cost more than the stickers, but the convenience fee will, will compensate for that. I mean, talking to Game and Parks, they consider it a revenue generator. And considering the amount of cuts that we've done in Appropriations recently, it's an opportunity for them, them to replace lost revenue.

RAYBOULD: Yeah. Well, thank you. I think it's, it's a good idea and I think people are willing to pay for that convenience.

DOVER: Thank you.

BRANDT: Senator Moser.

MOSER: So is this going to replace the sticker? Or you get a sticker and a hang tag? Or how do you see this working?

DOVER: So you can continue to do what you're doing. But if you want to have the hang tag and not do the window sticker, you'll simply order this and it will be the same-- it will be the cost of the Nebraska State Parks sticker for \$35 plus the duplicate fee of \$17.50 plus the convenience fee that will be set by the Game and Park-- the Game and Parks. So you-- it's not mandate-- you can choose either one. So it's just a, it's just an option. It's just an option to you don't want to do the traditional window sticker, just an option.

MOSER: You gonna let everybody print their own, like your license plates?

DOVER: Oh, no, that's actually in the bill. It says you cannot copy that so. Some people may try.

BRANDT: OK. Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Yes. Thank you, Senator Brandt and Senator Dover. Thank you for letting me speak. The only problem I have with this bill is I didn't think of it. It's a great idea. It's a great idea and I would

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not let anybody else use mine, mine because if they lost it, and I'm-- so I think that addresses that issue. And I wish, I wish we would had it already because I've got three of them for each of my vehicles sitting there paper-clipped, and I want to go to Mahoney, because it's too stinking cold. And I want to get in and clean my windshield, do all that stuff, do it right. And I'm going to Mahoney tomorrow afternoon and I don't know if they'll let me in, because that's not on my window. So the hang tag, I think, is a great idea. And I appreciate you bringing it. And I would be one that I would do it for convenience. And I'd pay the extra money just so I don't have to have stuff sticking on my windshield.

DOVER: Thank you, Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

BRANDT: Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: So if we pass this bill this year, and does it have an emergency clause? I mean, will--

No, that's a good idea.

RAYBOULD: --it come out in 2027?

DOVER: I think Game and Parks will probably speak to that. They'll have to, if it does pass, they'll have the contract, the printing and everything of it. It shouldn't take long, but so they'll speak to that.

RAYBOULD: Do you know, what do other states do?

DOVER: I think some of the states-- I think there's some states that have it, but the Game and Parks will talk, talk to it. Some states actually have the license plate tag that we looked at originally. It was a compromise, and I think it's a good compromise. Thank you.

BRANDT: On the bottom of the fiscal note, it says, Game and Parks is anticipating the new hang tag, tag permits will bring in \$67.50. And then that would be versus the stickers, which are \$35. So does that sound accurate?

DOVER: Game and Parks can speak to that, but it does.

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BRANDT: OK. And then I guess the last, and this is just maybe an observation, on Senator Hughes's point that all of her friends could borrow her hang tag, we could probably print this with the person's name on the hang tag because they're going to get printed or numbered somewhere to make that maybe a little more obvious that a, a tag is getting used somewhere else, so.

CLOUSE: Yeah, it's a good idea.

DOVER: They will be, they will have a-- I mean, I know that would be a probably better idea because it's simpler. But they do plan on just like the window stickers, they'll have a number on them.

BRANDT: Sure. Senator Juarez, did you have a question?

JUAREZ: Yeah, I just sort of have a quick one. Have you guys ever thought about a discount rate for seniors to get into the parks? Do they have one?

HUGHES: I think they have one.

JUAREZ: Oh.

DOVER: [INAUDIBLE].

HUGHES: Ask the Game and Parks.

DOVER: I know there's, there's veterans and-- I know there's a number of discounted and free.

JUAREZ: That's why I'd like to inquire for the seniors.

RAYBOULD: I don't think, I don't think there's a senior discount. I just looked--

BRANDT: All right, that looks like it's the end of questions for you for the moment. Let's go to proponents.

DOVER: And Senator Brandt, I have another meeting to be in at 2:00, which is right now. So I'm going to waive my closing, if that's OK.

BRANDT: Yep, we can take that.

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DOVER: All right, thank you.

MOSER: We appreciate that. It shortens our [INAUDIBLE].

BRANDT: Thank you.

JIM SWENSON: Looks like I got some good questions to respond to.

BRANDT: Yes, you do.

HUGHES: Yeah, you do. All right.

BRANDT: Welcome.

JIM SWENSON: Welcome. Good afternoon, Chairman Brandt, members of the Natural Resources Committee. My name is Jim Swenson, J-i-m S-w-e-n-s-o-n, I have the honor to serve as a deputy director for the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission, 2200 N. 33rd Street here in Lincoln. On behalf of Game and Parks, I offer this testimony in support of LB1127, and we thank Senator Dover for introducing the bill. Park entrance permits are required for all registered and licensed motorized vehicles entering state parks. Those permits are adhered to the vehicle's interior front windshield. LB1127 does not remove that practice, but rather creates a good option for a hang tag-style annual vehicle entry permit for Nebraska residents. The action provides a reasonable, convenient purchase option for state park visitors to consider and allows them to transfer the permit to a second vehicle registered in their name. Some of the other advantages that we have discovered in the process of investigating this, the hang tag not only eliminates the challenge to remove the permit from the windshield, but it's also a nice option for those visitors that do not want to attach the permit to the windshield, such as vintage car owners. It's a common complaint, if you will, that we receive frequently. Secondly, if the customer sells their vehicle or replaces the windshield, presently there's a process which is a little-- takes a little bit of time to get it replaced, whereas now they can just transfer that tag over to that other vehicle. And lastly, a transferable tag facilitates opportunity for new customers to visit Nebraska State Parks, such as daycares, assisted living facilities, health care facilities who have previously asked us to consider an option like this so that they can have the ability to bring the fleet of vehicles into our park environments for fishing opportunities, park picnics, things of that nature. So we see a great advantage with that

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option. The fee for the hang tag would be equivalent to the price of one annual and one duplicate annual resident park entrance permit, plus a convenience fee not to exceed \$15. If LB1127 is adopted, approval of that final fee will be the decision of our Board of Commissioners. The convenience fee will cover the cost of production, that's identified in the fiscal note, and will serve to offset any abuse, which we believe will be nominal based on some conversations we've had with another state. This model is similar to South Dakota State Parks. They offer a hang tag option. In 2025, they sold approximately 3,000 of those tags. Their fee is \$90. The price of their annual duplicate plus a surcharge as well. The fiscal note for the bill identified a similar level of sales in Nebraska. And if the full convenience fee is approved, the \$15, we would expect a gain in revenue of approximately \$40,000 on an annual basis. The Nebraska State Parks System is touted as one of the best in the nation, I hope you can agree. Revenue from user fees is necessary for continued high-quality operation and maintenance of those parks. We believe the hang tag will encourage new visitors and therefore additional revenue. Also, we are sensitive to the voice of our park visitors. Customer service is a very high priority for our agency. We feel the hang tag provides a convenience for our park visitors and enhances their overall customer experience. And with that, I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

BRANDT: I see hands everywhere on this side of ours. Senator Clouse.

CLOUSE: Thank you, Senator Brandt. And I had a voice in my left ear that says be careful with the handicap because they don't like their names on the handicap. So I would just say check what they do with the handicap stickers and just make sure it's kind of enjoined on how they handle those.

JIM SWENSON: Yeah, one, one thing we'll do in the design is we'll actually create a holographic image in there so they cannot be readily reproduced. They may have an identifying number which gives us a tracking capability as well. So that'll be one way we will prevent some of the abuse. Good question. Thanks.

BRANDT: Senator Moser.

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MOSER: So, will you have a lifetime hang tag, so you don't have to get one every year and charged 20 times?

JIM SWENSON: You know, we haven't carried our conversations quite that far yet, but we'll see how this hang tag does. And who knows, maybe we'll be sitting in this room discussing this.

MOSER: 20 times 60, that'd be \$1,200.

JIM SWENSON: There you go.

MOSER: That'd take care of your, your fiscal note.

CONRAD: Not quite, but--

JIM SWENSON: We'll keep that in mind. Senator Raybould.

RAYBOULD: So I'm, I'm curious. Did South-- has South Dakota just done away with a sticker and just gone with hang tags? Sounds like they've been doing it a little bit longer than us.

JIM SWENSON: Actually a, a couple couple years in they been doing it. They did not do away with their other, their regular adhesive permits. The hang tag is an option, just they're treating it the same way we plan to treat it. It's an alternative out there for those that wish to get it. It does have a \$30 surcharge in South Dakota.

RAYBOULD: OK, and can you address, is there a senior discount on park entrance fees?

JIM SWENSON: There's not a senior discount on park entry permits. We have some discount programs for veterans. You know, there are a lot of senior discounts we offer for hunting and fishing licenses, of course, and some other options there.

RAYBOULD: OK, thank you.

BRANDT: Senator Juarez.

JUAREZ: Well, I'd like to politely suggest that your board consider senior discounts. We're trying to give you guys great ideas today, right? And I wanted to know, as far as the renewal goes, is that just something that you'll process internally and then if somebody goes to

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the park again the following year, how will it be verified that they've paid the fee again?

JIM SWENSON: It is an annual permit, so we'll produce new hang tags each and every year. And we'll have these available at our central office or district offices and designated park locations. So it'll require a purchase each year, and that's necessary because we'll have to change the image, the color, and things like that to make sure that everything is current.

JUAREZ: Well, I guess I would also like to suggest that maybe you look at something that will be biodegradable or something if we're going to do it every year--

JIM SWENSON: That's a very--

JUAREZ: --with the plastic.

JIM SWENSON: Very good suggestion. We'll do, we'll do that.

JUAREZ: Thank you. Make sure to give me credit. I can use the brownie points.

JIM SWENSON: Happy to do so.

BRANDT: Any other questions? So are you comfortable the way the bill is written? It's a simple bill. This is something we can exec out quickly and get to the floor. I know he mentioned the E clause, but I don't know, if you guys aren't ready to design this the first year. You're probably looking at, what, January 1st of '27?

JIM SWENSON: That is correct. January 1st, '27 is the date that we have in mind. We've helped with the language of this bill, drafting it, and so on and so forth. So yes, we're very comfortable.

BRANDT: Senator Moser.

MOSER: What if we make our own hang tag and stick the sticker to it and hang it on the rear view mirror?

JIM SWENSON: You know, when our conservation officers write tickets for that, we generate a lot more revenue.

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MOSER: That's a fictitious permit.

JIM SWENSON: Yes, that would be no.

MOSER: I thought it sounded like a good, cheap version.

CLOUSE: I just want to get into Mahoney tomorrow afternoon. Whatever it takes.

BRANDT: It'll be snowing. OK, any other questions? Thank you.

JIM SWENSON: Thank you much.

BRANDT: Any other proponents? Any opponents? Anyone to testify in the neutral capacity? Senator Dover left, so there will be no bill closing. That and there were no comments online, is that right? And that will conclude our hearing on LB1127 So with that, if the public could leave for a minute, we've got to discuss something in exec.