

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
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Appropriations Committee
February 06, 2018

[LB727]

The Committee on Appropriations met at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 6, 2018, in Room 1524 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB727. Senators present: John Stinner, Chairperson; Kate Bolz, Vice Chairperson; Rob Clements; Robert Hilkemann; John Kuehn; Mike McDonnell; Dan Watermeier; and Anna Wishart. Senators absent: Tony Vargas.

SENATOR STINNER: (Recorder malfunction)...Appropriations Committee hearing. My name is John Stinner. I'm from Gering and represent the 48th Legislative District. I serve as Chair of this committee. I'd like to start off by having members do self-introductions, starting with Senator Clements.

SENATOR CLEMENTS: I'm Rob Clements from Elmwood. I represent Cass County, parts of Otoe and Sarpy, District 2.

SENATOR McDONNELL: Mike McDonnell, LD5, south Omaha.

SENATOR KUEHN: John Kuehn, District 38: seven counties in the south-central part of the state.

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Robert Hilkemann, District 4, west Omaha.

SENATOR STINNER: John Stinner, District 48, all of Scotts Bluff County.

SENATOR WISHART: Senator Wishart, District 27 in west Lincoln.

SENATOR STINNER: Assisting the committee today is Jenni Svehla, our committee clerk. At each entrance you will find green testifier sheets. If you are planning on testifying today, please fill out a green sign-in sheet and hand it to the committee clerk when you come up to testify. If you will not be testifying at the microphone but would want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard today there are white sign-in sheets at each entrance where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. These sign-in sheets will become exhibits in the permanent record at the end of today's hearings. To better facilitate today's proceedings, I ask that you abide by the following procedures. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Move to the reserve chairs when you are ready to testify. Order of testimony will be introducer, proponent, opponents, neutral, and closing. When we hear testimony regarding agencies we will first hear from a representative of the agency. We will then hear testimony from

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anybody...anyone wishing to speak on the agency's budget request. We would ask that you spell your first name and last name for the record before you testify; be concise. It is my request that you limit your testimony to five minutes. Written materials may be distributed to the committee members as exhibits only while testimony is being offered. Hand them to the page for distribution to the committee and staff when you come up to testify. We need 12 copies. If you have written testimony but do not have 12 copies, please raise your hand now so the page can make copies for you. With that, we will begin today's hearings with LB727. Senator Wayne. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: Good afternoon, Chair Stinner. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: Good afternoon. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: It is my duty to always enter at least one bill to come before this committee every year because I enjoy you guys so much. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: Always such a pleasure. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: (Laugh) My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent the Legislative District 13, the "Mighty 13," which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. I'm here to introduce LB727, which would appropriate \$1 million a year for the next four years to the Nebraska State Historical Society. This bill mandates that half of the appropriation every year be granted out to historic and preservation-based nonprofit organizations around the state. There are historic markers throughout the state. From Omaha all the way to Scottsbluff, they are showing their age, worn and faded by the years of exposure. There is a place...there are places that are significant markers that should be updated or placed there that sometimes aren't even there. As it stands, all resources that go into the marker restoration and expansion come from private dollars. I think as a state it's our turn to put money into this fund to make sure that we can support the markers throughout our state and make sure the people who drive through our lovely state know the historical significance. There are historical societies, nonprofits, and preservation groups trying to preserve the story of our state, and I believe the Nebraska State Historical Society is best suited...is the best suited organization to help in this objective and to help identify the ones that can use the money the best. These local historic nonprofits help citizens build their connections with their community. They promote legacy and tradition and they help create a sense of identity for that community in which they all live. In my district itself, I am from historic...in my district, I represent the historic Florence district. We have Minne Lusa and we have the Mormon Winter Quarters. We also have the old Fort Omaha just outside of my district. These are some of the most historic markers or historic places in the state of Nebraska that should be celebrated. And when people actually travel,

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especially those from the Mormon background, to Omaha they always go down to Florence to see the old mill. They always go down to see the museum and other markers that actually have one marker not marked at all, but their organization remembers to point out some of the significances in that area. And I think as a state we have an obligation to remember our past so it's not forgotten so we can prepare better for our future. I ask you to support this bill. I ask you to give it the green vote when we get out on the floor because I know this will come out of committee. And I'll be happy to answer any questions. And just so you know, I'm open to any amendments. I'm open to working with any group or any individual on this committee to make sure this is a success, because education is the passport to the future. Tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today and you have to know where you've been so you know where you go. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: Thank you. Questions? Seeing none...oh, Senator Hilkemann. [LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Senator, and the funding source? [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: I'm open to where we could find dollars. We were just...my bill just simply appropriates it so... [LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: So you're suggesting we take it from the General Fund. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: Unless you can help me find another place. I will be with you one on one and you can help me find that. I have no problem doing that. But, yes, I think we have to make sure we preserve our historical markers and our history in our state. [LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Are you suggesting that...you mentioned that we have some that need to be updated or improved. Are you talking...is that what you're more concerned about, improving the ones that we have? Or are you...or do we have historical places that have not been marked? [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: So there are a couple that I can think of that haven't been marked, but I'm more concerned about some of the ones that I've currently seen that are in shambles, and not just in my district. A district south of me in Omaha, Malcolm X, a great civil rights leader, if you were to drive up to his marker you would see tires and trash. And that has almost 100,000 visitors a year throughout the country, actually throughout the world. When traveled over across the states, across the seas, he brought people from all over Islam here. He was born right here in Nebraska. And again, I mentioned one in Florence. There's a couple markers that are just old and beat up and it's up to the neighborhood association to do it. It's up to nonprofits to do it. But I

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think as a state we owe it to the people of our state to make sure their history isn't forgotten.
[LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Do you think if these markers were updated and improved that that would help with the...you're talking about the Malcolm X one. Do you think that that would help with the trash and so forth that surround it or...? [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: Yes, I think some of those dollars can be used to help with that. But I think it's just more about creating that sense of pride. Now I'm fortunate enough to have Florence and Minne Lusa area that has a great sense of pride and they go out and raise money to do it. But in some of the other areas in my district where I move farther to the west that has 60th area and Ames area, there's some historic markers. And like I said, in Senator Chambers' district where those neighborhood associations don't have the disposable income, and so those young kids walking around don't know that there used to be a significant Preston Love playing on 24th and Lake and how arts has changed his life and took him all across the country before he died. Having that marker there is a great thing. And actually what inspired this, since you brought it up, OPS, through a grant, has a program called Making Invisible Histories Visible, and they based it out of north and south Omaha. (Inaudible) to the kid in south Omaha and a group of kids every year in north Omaha and they go around and find these historic markers and make video clips on them. But you'll find a lot of them don't have markers, but those kids who are in these programs not only had that sense of belonging but it showed them a different way. It showed them that you can make it out. It showed them that just because I live on 24th and Pratt doesn't mean I have to stay here because there has been significant people who came from the same neighborhood that I came from. [LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: I appreciate your efforts and I certainly appreciate your last comments regarding we do need to preserve and cherish the history that we have here in this state and in our county. I feel that strongly too. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: Okay. Additional questions? Senator Wishart. [LB727]

SENATOR WISHART: Senator Wayne, good to see you here again. This is a question that I've asked other people who have come before us, realizing that we are experiencing a deficit, and they come before us with legislation that would ask us, as an Appropriations Committee, to invest additional dollars. Have you spoken at all with the Revenue Committee about their responsibility in terms of the revenue side of the issue and the needs that we have in terms of the historical preservation? [LB727]

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SENATOR WAYNE: Not specifically about historical preservation, but I have enough bills in Revenue to raise enough money to get us out of the debt and to cover this expense. So... [LB727]

SENATOR WISHART: Okay. Thank you. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: ...I think we'll be okay there. [LB727]

SENATOR WISHART: Okay. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: (Laugh) Thank you. Additional questions? Seeing none, thank you very much. [LB727]

SENATOR WAYNE: Thank you. And I do have to apologize. I have a couple more bills, thanks to McDonnell convincing me to introduce so many this year, that I have to go to another hearing. So I have to waive my closing. [LB727]

SENATOR HILKEMANN: Okay. [LB727]

SENATOR STINNER: Okay. Thank you. Any proponents? Any proponents? Seeing none, any opponents? Seeing none, anybody in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that concludes our hearing on LB727. [LB727]