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Education Committee
March 20, 2017

[LB14 LB155 LB308]

The Committee on Education met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, March 20, 2017, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB14, LB155, and LB308. Senators present: Mike Groene, Chairperson; Rick Kolowski, Vice Chairperson; Laura Ebke; Steve Erdman; Lou Ann Linehan; Adam Morfeld; Patty Pansing Brooks; and Lynne Walz. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR GROENE: Welcome to the Education Committee public hearing. My name is Mike Groene from Legislative District 42; I serve as chair of the committee. The committee will take up the bills in the order posted. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process as the second house in our Unicameral system. This is your opportunity to express your position on the proposed legislation before us today. I don't know why I'm doing this, looks like mostly lobbyists here, but...I think you've all heard this part before...to better facilitate the day's proceedings I ask that you abide by the following procedures: please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. Move to the chairs in front of the room when you are ready to testify. The order of testimony is introducer, proponents, opponents, neutral, and closing remarks. If you will be testifying, please complete the green form and hand it to the committee clerk when you come up to testify. If you have written materials that you would like distributed to the committee, please hand them to the page to distribute. We need 12 copies for all committee members and staff. If you need additional copies, please ask a page to make copies for you to distribute. When you begin to testify, please state and spell your name for the record; that's for the transcribers so they can get your name right. Please be concise. It is my request that you limit your testimony...how many folks plan on testifying today? We'll go five minutes, so please, when you see the red light, stop, because we're going to give you extra time. It looks like we can handle that today. We'll go five minutes. We'll be using the light system: green is four minutes, yellow-one minute; and then wrap up when you see red...or stop when you see red. If you would like your position to be known but do not wish to testify, please sign the white form at the back of the room and it will be included in the official record. Please speak directly into the microphone so our transcribers are able to hear your testimony today. The committee members with us today will introduce themselves. I'm sure Senator Morfeld and Senator Pansing Brooks, they haven't told me otherwise, will be showing up here. Otherwise, we'll start at the far right. Senator Linehan.

SENATOR LINEHAN: Hi. Good afternoon, Senator Lou Ann Linehan from western Douglas County.

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Senator Rick Kolowski, District 31 in southwest Omaha.

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SENATOR EBKE: Laura Ebke, District 32: Jefferson, Thayer, Fillmore, Saline, and the southwest portion of Lancaster County.

SENATOR ERDMAN: Steve Erdman, District 47: ten counties in the Nebraska Panhandle.

SENATOR WALZ: Lynne Walz, District 15, which is all of Dodge County.

SENATOR GROENE: To my immediate left will be our committee counsel, Charles Garman, who is handling the bills today. To my far right is our committee clerk, Kristina McGovern. And the pages today are Lexi...that don't look like Lexi over there...what's your name young man?

TRENTON BUHR: Trenton Buhr.

SENATOR GROENE: What, Trent?

TRENTON BUHR: Trenton Buhr.

SENATOR GROENE: Trenton Buhr and Sam Baird, both are students at the University of Nebraska. Is that right? Ah. Please remember that senators may come and go during our hearing as they may have bills to introduce in other committees. I also would like to remind our committee members to speak directly into the microphones. Lastly, we are electronically equipped. You might see some of us on our electronic devices, phones and stuff. Normally, we're doing research so we can ask the right questions or texting our staff back in our offices to look something up for us so we can be accurate in our questioning. We will start with LB14. Senator Krist. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: (Exhibit 1) Good afternoon, Senator Groene, members of the Education Committee. For the record, my name is Bob Krist, B-o-b K-r-i-s-t; I represent the 10th Legislative District, northwest Omaha, along with the north central parts of Douglas County, including the city of Bennington. I appear before you today in introduction and support of LB14. So to be clear for those members who are new to this committee, when I was on this committee last year, I introduced LB868. It was introduced in 2016, the second session of the One Hundred Fourth Legislature. LB14, in green copy, is exactly LB868 from last year. All of us come up with great ideas; and one of my ideas in terms of supporting civics is for our kids to understand the constitution, understand their rights, and understand their responsibilities under the constitution. I attempted to tell the Department of Education and our educators how to do business and I can assure you that's not ever going to end up well for anyone. So I worked for the last year and a half, two years on a consensus and what could be done, or what should be done to bring about

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what I think is the best effort to support civics understanding across our youth. It is represented in AM625, and I handed a copy out to you; it's been on-line for about a week. And by the way, the department sent it out to the key stakeholders so they could comment on AM625 in part or in total. Civics education engagement initiatives, this updates a Nebraska statute first enacted in 1949 to ensure that Nebraska students arrive at the twenty-first century and are fully literate about our nation's history, government, geography, and economic system. The amendment adds language about the social studies standards now required under the Quality Education Accountability Acts and are used to align social studies curriculum in schools and to ensure that school districts have developed and utilized formative, interim, summative assessments to determine mastery of the social studies standards, including use, as determined by the school districts' level, of the United States Citizenship Civics Test, which is a test that all new U.S. citizens must pass. I especially want to thank the commissioner, Matt Blomstedt, and his staff. Essentially, the work that went into the interim study--or the interim period--is recommended as AM625 by the department. It is my strong opinion that AM625 strikes the appropriate balance for Nebraska. It maintains local control for school districts, while also establishing a baseline for civics education in the classroom so that all students can have a fundamental foundational knowledge needed to become well-informed, engaged citizens. Nebraska is certainly not alone in having these discussions, and I am thankful that, since last session, the conversations around civics and social studies have continued to gain momentum. In February, the Department of Education hosted a social studies summit where dozens of teachers, state board members, civic organizations, and stakeholders gathered for two days to talk about the state's civics education in Nebraska. I was fortunate to attend and see first hand the amazing work that these teachers and staff across our state are already doing and I believe that the change in LB14, AM625, will only spur the continuance of their ability to bring meaningful civics experiences and curriculum into the classroom. There are many strong partners in Nebraska who I believe will benefit from an increased focus on civics, social studies, student government, debate teams, boys and girls scouts of the state, and many others. Students have had a strong foundation...who have a strong foundation in democratic values and America's history are in turn well positioned to contribute to society. I ask for the committee's support of AM625 and LB14. And again, I want to emphasize a thank you to the department for helping me fashion what I think will be the right answer for the state of Nebraska. I have a few closing comments, so I'll stick around until the end, Mr. Chairman. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions for Senator Krist? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Senator. Senator Krist, thank you for bringing this bill forward, and thank you for your zeal for it. It's good to see this come forward. I wanted to ask you about the passage of what percentage in the amended AM625 that exists compared to the first thing that came out. Is there a certain percentage or just dispersing the tests and then teachers would use it the way they want to within the classroom? [LB14]

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SENATOR KRIST: This is a direct line to local school boards to implement. I would envision that they would be the standard set by the local school boards. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: They would set that, whatever it might be. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Absolutely. Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Or whatever level that would be. Another aspect in the civic education of high school students...many times the government class or civics class would contain a number of hours of volunteerism on the part of the students, could be anywhere from 10 to 40 hours of that dedicated effort. Do you see that in any part of this bill coming forward as far as that volunteerism? [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Well, to be clear, I focused on the high school level last year, as you know. This actually focuses on putting the fundamentals in elementary and junior high level so that, by the time they get to the high school level, they can go on the experiential and do those kinds of things that you suggest. So I think there's no interference with the current curriculum. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I'll have to go back to the social studies standards and see how much that was recommended as far as the high school level, but I just...it was a missing piece of what I was reading here in yours and having experienced that with students in high school, it's a very, very powerful part of their experience. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: I believe Cory will be here from the department. And I would ask you to pose that question to him as well... [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I will. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: ... because we had some extensive conversations about that during the last year. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other...Senator Erdman. [LB14]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Groene. Thank you, Senator Krist. This very bill we discussed when we had our practice day...came into the Legislature. I thought it was interesting; I appreciate that. On line 23 on page 3, it talks about development...it says that at least two of the three grades from the 5th grade to 8th grade in all public, private, denominational, and parochial schools. Private--does that mean homeschoolers? [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: I think you're going to hear somebody from the homeschoolers come forward and talk about it, but it is my interpretation that public, private, denominational, and parochial includes all possibilities of education within the state. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So then we are going to place a restriction on a request on private, denominational, and parochial schools that receive absolutely no financial contribution from the state? [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Well, I think this bill...or this amendment actually recommends a standard in social studies and allows the local school board; for example, the Omaha Diocese would have to implement how this is going to be carried out within their school district. And again, it is not an unfunded mandate in any way because there are already tests available for free on-line that they can comply with. But it's no longer a recommendation. It is something that we emphasize as a testable curriculum within social studies. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: I wasn't indicating it was a unfunded mandate. I was saying we are going to force these people to do things that they don't normally do; and that's going to be a problem for me. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Okay. Well, that is your interpretation and I respect that interpretation. However, I will tell you that the parochial school system, particularly the Archdioceses in Omaha, is already testing to these areas and these curriculum, so, again, I would ask you to address that question to the school board or to the department, because I don't see it as either an unfunded mandate or an imposition. I see it as a continuation of the education system. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Then the other issue is...we were...originally, I think the bill said they were required to take the nationalization test. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: It suggests... [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: This bill just recommends it. Right? They don't have to... [LB14]

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SENATOR KRIST: They recommend that there are several opportunities to use a test. One of them is the Joe Foss Institute test, and one of them would be the naturalization test in general. And then last year, and if I hadn't said it so far, I don't think I have, there were several recommendations by Senator Pansing Brooks and Senator Morfeld last year that there are other things that could probably be added to this test, for example--Who is Willa Cather? What is the history of Nebraska when it comes to some of our great women, men, and Native Americans and their contributions in history. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Ebke. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Thanks. Senator Krist, just to be clear about this, because we may be talking across each other here. The lines 23 and 24 are not new; they are currently...that Senator Erdman was referring to. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: That's correct. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: That this is not new. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: So currently the statute would read: in at least two of the three grades from the 5th grade to the 8th grade in all public, private, denominational, and parochial schools, at least three periods per week shall be set aside to be devoted to the teaching of American history from approved text books...yada, yada, yada. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Right. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Right? [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Right. Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE I thought so. I wanted to clear that. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: They struck through those three periods a week. [LB14]

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SENATOR EBKE: Yes, because that's the current. What's underlined is the new. And so... [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So I understand that. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: But...so there's nothing new here. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: I understood that. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. Just making sure that, for the record, that we aren't confused because it's not like there's a new mandate here. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: No. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: I'm not confused. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? I have one. I believe homeschools are referred...completely in their own language and when they say "private" that's a nondenominational private school which exists out there. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Right. Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: It says: ensure that the district develop and utilize formative and interim and summative assessments including, but not limited to, the 100 questions. So they must include that civics test as part of their base. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: They have to test to the criteria within social studies in that area and it is suggesting that that might be one of the ways that they could do that. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, it says...I'm for it, I mean, don't... [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: I got it. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Ensure that the district develop and utilize formative interim and summative assessments including--that's not an if/or--including, but not limited to, 100-questions

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civic portion of the naturalization exam. So that's the base, that one is included, but then they could use other tests, too. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: They need to develop a test and not to exclude the possibility of using that 100 to test to that area. But as I said, there's nothing that would keep them from writing their own test in terms of the criteria that were set up in social studies. But they are required to issue the test, yes. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Okay, but they are required to include the 100-question civics portion of the naturalization exam administered by the United States Citizen and Immigration Service as part of the background to the test. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: That's the basic; yes, sir. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: All right, thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: I understand. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Yeah, thank you. Any other questions for Senator Krist? Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Proponents. Come on, don't be shy; we want that seat filled. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: All right, thank you. I had not intended to be first because then you get the most questions. Senator Groene, members of the committee, John, J-o-h-n, Bonaiuto, B-o-n-a-i-u-t-o, representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards. I am here as a proponent of LB14 as amended by AM625. And we want to thank Senator Krist for really working hard to make this a workable, sensible law. And for those of you that are not new to the committee, you remember that I sat in this chair and opposed this bill, strongly opposed this bill in the past, because it was putting curriculum into statute and taking authority away from local school boards. So this is a big change. And the folks I represent are the folks that are impacted by this law. And I want to say very emphatically that school board members have been following the Americanism Law. It's an old law. I mean we're talking about a law that was a McCarthy era-type law. And Senator Krist has modernized this law, and really it will be helpful as we move forward. School board members like the new name, the American Civic Competence and Engagement. The committee on that, rather than trying to have it be something that strikes fear

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into folks that it is a working committee, and school board members will meet annually, they'll talk about civics and social studies and, then, any ideas that come from that committee, I know that they will do a report to the whole board. And when they bring things to the entire board, then there's an opportunity for broader discussion on what happens in this committee. But we also appreciate Senator Krist involving NDE; the department is critical in dealing with curriculum issues and working with schools. And school board members do recognize that this bill allows them to maintain the authority in a very important area and doesn't dictate to them beyond asking them to follow a framework. So with that, I will conclude that part of my testimony and ask one question for the record and this is something, whether Senator Krist answers or someone from the department, in section (e) (sic: subsection (1)(e)), and it starts on the bottom of page 2 and finishes on the top of page 3, it talks about the teachers in the district--employed by the district--are properly certified to teach social studies. We're taking that as a broad statement so that if you're an elementary teacher and you have your certification, you're certified to teach social studies, or...obviously, if you're a social studies teacher, you have to have the proper certification or endorsement, but I was asked about that and I wanted to just make a point of putting that question on the record. With that I will conclude my testimony. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Questions? Senator Ebke. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: That's an interesting point that you make there and it flew right by me. But could one not also, you know, ensure that all teachers employed by the district--and that could even be read to say math teachers and...I mean, we maybe want to think about that a little bit, how that's worded or...maybe, Senator Krist will say I'm just crazy, but that's something to think about. And that may be true. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: It caught our attention, Senator. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay, thanks. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Senator Ebke touched on the exact point that I saw equally. John, the way that was worded made it look like there are elementary K-5 teachers that are certified in social studies. Well, they might have certification for 6, 7, 8, or 9, 10, 11, 12, but I don't think there's a certification for elementary social studies in that vein; it's an elementary teacher. So that would be one thing I think we have to be careful about that...and the state department people who are here might be able to speak to that better. Thank you. [LB14]

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JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? So, the old law said--ensure that...assure themselves as to the character of all teachers employed and their knowledge and acceptance of the American form of government. So now we don't have to worry about anymore, you can just hire anybody? If they hate America, they can influence our children? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: No, Senator. But... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, that's what it used to be. You had to make sure they would believe in the American form of life. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: We believe that there are adequate safeguards in background checks and before people get certified and are going to become teachers. Again, this is a law that was developed during the McCarthy era and we were having teachers sign loyalty oaths during this period of time. And I think that there was a little bit of controversy about that not that long ago when an old law that was on the books was questioned--should we do this or shouldn't we do this? And it was being ignored for years. And so, again, I think Senator Krist is modernizing this law to make it work now and into the future without having to go back and think about what was it really saying, because it was written so long ago. But your point... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Has patriotism changed? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: No. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Has what we want to instruct our children changed? That we don't...they're in an American school, paid by American taxpayers, are free because of the veterans who fought for freedom... [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Absolutely. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: That's changed? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: No. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: So if a teacher, which I've heard stories that sits during the National Anthem or sits during the Pledge of Allegiance, you can no longer...the administration can no

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longer confront them and say you're setting a bad example for our children, because before they could. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And I don't...and I think...the way this law is being modernized, doesn't detract from that, but I think... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Yeah, it does. It said they had to...their knowledge and acceptance of American form of government they had to prove that they... [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: I believe it had...if this is a different time and there are things that are being interpreted differently, laws are...people have rights and how those rights are interpreted are critical. I mean, I don't want to diminish anything from the patriotism, civic education, but it is a really...a lot different time than when this... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: An employee of a school have the right, to my six-year-old grandchild, to show their disdain for the country by sitting during the National Anthem? They have that right? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator, there is... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: They're employees; they have that right as a private citizen, not as an employee, do they? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator, that is a question that I would say policy would dictate and law would dictate. But there are rights. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. John, the essence of social studies education, if you think it's all names and dates and places and all the rest, those are just tools. They're used in every grade level, any grade level, in any course that we teach social studies, having been a major in that area, and political science and history, and the true issue that we're dealing with is critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making and applying that to the lives of the students and to our world around us. Has that changed in the way you read this? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Absolutely not. [LB14]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: As to the essence to what we're doing? [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Absolutely not, Senator. And I do believe that the rewrite of the Americanism statute, and I would just refer to it as that...the old statute rather than 79-724, but this rewrite modernizes the language so it reinforces exactly what you're saying. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: We're talking about thinking now. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, we are. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other...Senator Linehan. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So...thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you for being here. On page 4, I'm not sure what to do about this, I'm just going to ask your thoughts...thought process on this...and maybe this is better for the Department of Education, but the benefits and advantages of our...line 9 through 11. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Um-hum. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So, obviously, "the benefits (and advantages) of our form of government and the rights and responsibilities as citizenship in our government"--that's all good. And then it strikes "dangers and fallacies of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies." So I kind of understand, maybe, why you strike "dangers", but shouldn't it be part of a high school or grade school education to talk about other government forms besides ours? Wouldn't that just increase the knowledge as far as critical thinking? It seems like that would...so I'm not saying it should be there, it just seems like maybe it should be somewhere in this, because striking it makes it look like we don't have to talk about that anymore. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator, as I read that, I was thinking about that same thing in that when we look at social studies standards and the broader picture, that is included. What you're asking would be included in the bigger picture. I think that when this law was written, we were specifically saying we want to make sure these students know that Nazism is bad, Communism is bad, we're going to study all of that, but it is...it's in a different vein than it was when this statute was created. [LB14]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: Well, I'm just saying my concern would be you strike it out and don't replace it someplace else it would make it look like you're not supposed to study that anymore. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: I think that that would be part of the social studies curriculum in the standards. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: I know. This is statute. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Yes, and... [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So we're striking it out of the statute. I'm just...anyway...okay, maybe the department can adjust that too. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And that is...and that's part of the difficulty about putting curriculum in statute. The curriculum changes and the statutes remain for years and the social studies curriculum is revised on a periodic basis. And so it's brought up to date and I'm confident that those areas are covered. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other questions? Thank you very much. [LB14]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you, Senator. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Again, proponents? Good afternoon. [LB14]

BRIAN O'SHEA: (Exhibit 2) Good afternoon. Brian O'Shea, B-r-i-a-n O-'-S-h-e-a. Good afternoon, committee members, my name is Brian O'Shea and I am here today on behalf of the Civics Education Initiative, which is a project of the Joe Foss Institute, here to voice our support for LB14 and the substitute language proposed by Senator Krist in AM625. First, we'd like to thank, again, Senator Krist for not only introducing this important legislation, but also working with our organization, the Department of Education, students, teachers, school administrators, school board members throughout the state to craft a solution that takes steps to address what former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor called the quiet crisis in education. As an organization dedicated to promoting civics education, we firmly believe in the goal of public education as envisioned by Thomas Jefferson, which was to instill in our youth the civic values

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that would sustain our fledgling republic. Today, however, that goal remains elusive and far from achieved. We've all seen the embarrassing man-on-the-street interviews on late-night TV where Americans can't even answer basic questions about our government and who we are as a nation. Numerous studies and surveys have found that a vast majority of American students and many adults lack the basic understanding of how our country was founded, how it is governed, and what it means to be a citizen. Recognizing these problems, back in 2014, we launched the Civics Education Initiative, which was based on a simple concept that American high school students should at least be able to pass the same test that all immigrants must pass before becoming U.S. citizens. Since launching the initiative, 16 states have adopted the proposal in some form. In fact, it's being signed into law in Arkansas today actually. And nearly 20 additional states are considering legislation in the coming year. A well-established test with study materials that are readily available on-line, the U.S. citizenship test is an easy resource for teachers to access at zero cost. In fact, the Joe Foss Institute has developed free lesson plans and a free on-line test portal that teachers can access for free to help them with some of these basic foundational lessons. Nearly 92 percent of new immigrants applying for citizenship pass the test on their first attempt, and we know our students can do as well or better. But we also know that there's not a one-size-fits-all approach. States are the laboratories of democracy, as you are well aware, and each of the 16 states that adopted our initiative have taken a slightly different approach, a slightly different pathway to getting there, ranging from requiring the test to be passed as part of a specific course to allowing students to take the test in middle school or into high school. Some states have implemented rigorous reporting systems to track and measure progress, while others have emphasized local control and local reporting of data. Working with Senator Krist and the Department of Education for the past year, we think the substitute language proposed accomplishes the goals our organization set out to achieve, ensuring that civics and social studies are on a level playing field with English, math, and science, while also ensuring that the final proposed legislation fits the culture of Nebraska in regards to local control of graduation requirements, assessment selection and curriculum development. We've always known that the U.S. citizenship test, in and of itself, is not panacea, it's not a silver bullet. There's much more that can be done to promote civic readiness. And I think, from the amendment and the work Senator Krist and the department have done, they provided additional language that came out of the recent social studies summit and has been incorporated in the amendment to continue advancing the ball forward on these important priorities. As amended, the legislation is a strong step forward toward ensuring and encouraging civic engagement in our youth and we strongly support its passage. Thank you again, Senator Krist, and members of the committee for your time. I'm happy to answer any additional questions you may have on what other states throughout the country are doing to promote civics education and civic readiness. Otherwise, thank you again for your time and the opportunity to comment on this important legislation.

[LB14]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Brian, appreciate you being here today. If we tested the audience as to who knows who Joe Foss was, what would that answer be do you think? [LB14]

BRIAN O'SHEA: I probably... [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I won't ask it right now, I'm just asking that. We'll talk about that another time. Any questions, please, Senators? Oh, sure...Senator, please. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you. Mr. O'Shea, thank you for being here. So is it your understanding that the--back to Senator Erdman's question earlier to--that the civics...the naturalization exam will be part of the test that's here? [LB14]

BRIAN O'SHEA: Yeah, our reading is this is setting a benchmark, a baseline that at least these questions would be covered. It would be up to local school districts to determine when that best would take place, whether it's broken up over different grades, whether these questions are covered in assessments, giving it various grade levels. I mean, looking at the test, most of these are middle school level, you know, grade level equivalent questions. But it also gives local districts the flexibility to go above and beyond to include Nebraska-based questions or to be doing more, you know, fitting this in at appropriate grade level or doing a more comprehensive exam in American government that, obviously, would cover a lot of these foundational things, but go as above and beyond into...you know, I mean comparing the constitution to this, or comparing various forms of government, or what have you. But, yeah, this would be kind of the floor. School districts at least have to give this exam or be giving these questions, broken out at appropriate grade levels. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. I think that's a yes. Thank you very much. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any additional questions, please? Thank you very much. Thanks for being here. [LB14]

BRIAN O'SHEA: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Next proponent, please. Good afternoon. [LB14]

AUDREY WORTHING: Good morning. For the record, my name is Audrey Worthing, A-u-d-r-e-y W-o-r-t-h-i-n-g. And thank you for welcoming Sydney, Anna, and myself here today. One of the most revealing things we have learned these past years has been how hard you all work and how dedicated you are to our state and country. We hope that someday our generation will be

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able to take your torch and continue to lead Nebraska and our nation to peace, prosperity, and freedom, and I know that you hope for the same. Unfortunately, we have a silent enemy to these hopes for our generation, an enemy that has successfully toppled both governments and civilizations. It is powerful, vast, and stealthy. It feeds on apathy and low expectations and hides behind bureaucracy, procedure, and red tape. The enemy is ignorance and it's fighting for the minds of my generation. More than a year and a half ago, we surveyed more than 200 juniors and seniors in the state of Nebraska and found that more than 80 percent of them could not pass a simple civics test that our country requires immigrants to pass to become citizens. But Nebraska is just a microcosm of a nation of youth and adults that also have minimal knowledge about our history and our government. We want to thank this committee, the State Board of Education, Senator Krist, and educators and leaders like the American Legion from across Nebraska for recognizing the importance of civics. Since our testimony to you last year, we have been privileged to participate in a lot of wonderful conversations on how to best increase civics knowledge and civic engagement in our schools. We have become aware of some wonderful after-school programs that are growing in larger communities of Omaha and Lincoln that focus on community service and leadership. We are grateful now, however, to reach a point of action. A point where we will be able to take a giant leap forward and pass a bill that will encourage all schools and all students in Nebraska to have a foundation of basic civics knowledge. LB14 makes a statement that civics knowledge is important, perhaps the more important thing we can teach in our schools and that Nebraska is ready to join a group of states that are becoming leaders to the rest of the nation. Please don't let another year slip away and another class of students enter the world with 80 percent not understanding our history and government, not being engaged and not having the knowledge to make informed voting decisions. Please help us ensure that the torch you will pass shines brightly and is carried confidently to the rest of the world. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB14]

AUDREY WORTHING: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Questions for this young lady? Anyone? Thank you very much. [LB14]

AUDREY WORTHING: Thank you very much. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Next proponent, please. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Good afternoon. For the record, I'm Cory, C-o-r-y, last name Epler, E-p-l-e-r; I'm the chief academic officer for the Nebraska Department of Education. I'm here as a proponent to

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LB14 as amended by AM625. The State Board of Education's legislative committee unanimously supports the amendment to LB 14. The Nebraska State Board of Education believes that a strong social studies education includes students learning foundational knowledge in civics, history, economics, and geography. More importantly, the board believes that students should have opportunities to use that foundational knowledge to address meaningful issues in our communities, thus encouraging greater civic participation and engagement. The proposed amendment clarifies the statutory provisions required of local school boards, school administrators, and school employees to ensure that students become confident and engaged and responsible citizens. Additionally, it offers guidance to schools and districts as they offer social...as they develop social studies instructional programs, as well as experiences. And it ensures that school districts teach and assess foundational knowledge in civics, history, economics, and geography. On behalf of Commissioner Blomstedt and the State Board of Education, I would like to thank Senator Krist for his commitment to ensuring that Nebraska students are fully literate about our nation's history, government, geography, and economic systems. He's demonstrated the value of civil discourse and has offered a solution we believe that will benefit our students in schools. With that I'm happy to answer any questions with respect to our position on LB14. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Epler. Questions? Adam, please. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Thanks for coming in today, Mr. Epler. In response to...I think it was either Senator Groene's questions, or maybe it was Senator Linehan's, I can't remember. By striking the "dangers and fallacies of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies" is that excluding, specifically, the teaching of different forms of government in class? Is that something that's already in the standards? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. It's reflected in the standards... [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: In the current standards. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: In the current standards. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: So it wouldn't preclude teaching those things? [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, sir...yes, ma-am, please. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. If...do you have a copy of the amendment? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes, I do. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: We had a little discussion about pages 2 and 3 that all teachers employed, and with the added wording, the ensure that all teachers employed by the districts properly certified to teach social studies. Is that something we should be worried about, or how will the department interpret that? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Well, I think that's a great point in terms of the clarification around requirements for elementary teachers because there is not an elementary social studies endorsement, so we would want to be sure to clarify the language around that. I think as we think about the requirements for social studies, the teaching endorsement, it speaks to middle school and high school. So again, seeking clarification around how we would ensure that elementary teachers also have the appropriate credentials and certification. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay, thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Linehan. I guess I'm taking back over. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you for being here. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So, everything in here that's crossed out, words that remain, this is the law today, right? [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Yes. The...what is...strike through. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. So here's...if the young woman who was very articulate was just up here that said that they took a test of kids and 80 percent of them failed the exam, which...you know, maybe that's just a really bad day. Why would that be if this is already the law? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think part of it speaks to...I've heard the representatives from the Joe Foss Institute, and even our own social studies educators speak to this idea of social studies being marginalized. And the approach that we're continuing to take at the Department of Education is we don't want to marginalize any content area: science, fine arts, physical education, etcetera. So we continue to work on supporting interdisciplinary teaching and learning. So how could we teach social studies in a 90 minute literacy block at the elementary level? How can we use that experience to make sure that teachers are not only meeting English language arts standards, but that they're also meeting social studies standards as well. So I think part of it comes back to our job in providing appropriate and timely professional learning for teachers and continuing to emphasize the important nature of assessment. And by assessment, I mean those formative, those interim, and those summative experiences; so not just assessment as a test they take in the spring relative to NeSA, but thinking about how we use all of those resources in order to make sure students are learning what is set forth in the social studies standards. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay, but this is the law now, so surely it's in your standards, right? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: But we're not...so what's the disconnect between law, standards, and then outcomes? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think it goes back to supporting quality instruction in our schools and continuing to provide resources to ensure that the information that's in the test. We did the analysis of the 100-question test to the current social studies standards. Every item is in the social studies standards and most typically at the 5th grade level. So again, thinking about how do we support our elementary teachers? How do we support our pre-K teachers and ensuring that they have what they need in order to most appropriately teach the standards? [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay, thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Ebke. [LB14]

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SENATOR EBKE: Thank you. Do we have NeSA testing yet for social studies? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: We do not. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: So we have what: math, science, language arts? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. So at some level what we test for is what we have an emphasis on, right? So that could be part of the problem? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think you made a good assessment. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. So I think I'm...I'm trying to figure...wrap my head around when this is all required. And I believe that, at least, LPS requires American Government like in junior year, or something like that. So I'm just interested when this test is to be given and when...they're supposed to be teaching from elementary on, is that what it basically is, and then... [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think as written in the amendment, it provides the local choice for the school to determine the most appropriate place to offer that type of assessment. I'm not able to speak to what a local school district is doing specifically. I think there will be some local folks up here a little bit later that you might be able to ask. But we really appreciate the fact that this does give the leeway to the local districts to think about their community and their students and determine when the most appropriate time to administer the assessment would be. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Okay. But they're supposed to be passing by the time they reach...by the time they graduate...or 70 percent. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: To my reading of this, there's not a...in this bill, in the amendment, it does not require the passing of the test for high school graduation. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: No, okay, but that's the goal. [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Well, I think... [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: It's a goal. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Our goal is that they would learn the content that are addressed in the social studies standards and would be able to use that particular assessment as one tool that would help students master the content that's outlined in the standards. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Have you looked at the immigration test? Isn't most of it within the curriculum of... [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: So the issue is trying to get an emphasis put on those things? I'm not quite sure. Because I've seen what my kids have brought home and I know they are learning those things, some of them. But, obviously, not everybody is learning it, as Ms. Worthing pointed out, so. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Well, and I think, too, it's part of this idea that that foundational knowledge is critical. But when we talk about engagement and being a responsible citizen, we know that it's much more than just what they learn in the classroom. And I think about the opportunity to use service learning projects. I think about the role that our student organizations play. The thing that I found most inspiring about what the students from Elm Creek did, it was a result of their trip to Washington, D.C., from an experience they had in a student organization. So thinking about how do we capitalize upon all of those resources and experiences that really not just helps students master content, but inspire them to become engaged citizens. I think when we look at it holistically, that's really what we're striving to do and saying that foundational knowledge is important, and those experiences that we want students to have are equally as important as well. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: I would agree. Thank you. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Um-hum. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Erdman. [LB14]

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SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Groene. So Senator Linehan asked how most students or the lack of teaching happen? And the law was already there for them to be taught that. And because we didn't test for that, we weren't teaching that, is that correct? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think the assumption that it's not being taught is incorrect, personally. We heard from our educators at the social studies summit that they are teaching these materials. And it would be interesting to do a statewide poll, similar to what the students from Elm Creek did, to determine at what level of...what is the level of knowledge that our middle school, high school students have relative to the items that are in the immigration and naturalization test, so... [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. So if the law was already there that you teach that and we adopt this statute, what says you're going to teach it any better than you did before? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think the difference, within the amendment, is that quality social studies instruction is clarified. Because you'll notice that the additions to the...in the amendment include things such as service learning, such includes teaching controversial issues. It focuses on experiences. And the language relative to the social studies standards was not in the current law, so the amendment clarifies that the foundational knowledge comes from the Nebraska social studies standards. Previously, that was not in the statute. It also says and clarifies the expectations for the assessment of those social studies standards as well. So what we see it as being is really clarifying and supporting that instruction that are grounded in the Nebraska social studies standards. So when we compare the original law to the amendment, the pieces related to instruction from social studies weren't emphasized like they are in the amendment. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. From where I sit, we shouldn't have to have Senator Krist introduce legislation telling you what to teach. This should have been part of your teaching curriculum all along and we shouldn't have to introduce legislation that teaches you that you need to teach about civics. That should have been something that happened. And if the students from Elm Creek did a survey and they found out what they found out, there's a disconnect between what you think you've been teaching and what they actually learned. And so I'm troubled by the fact that we have to put statutes in place to have you do what we think would be normally taught in a public school about America. And then the other issue I got, did you come and testify against this bill last year when it was LB14 (sic: LB868)? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: No, the...I believe the State Board of Education, last year, was neutral. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: So what would be...why do we have to change all the wording that was in here that required them to take the test what we have now? [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Again, I think it goes back to the emphasis of quality teaching in social studies education. That is what we see the major difference between this bill and the former bill. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Walz. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Yeah...so the mastery and the assessment, it's not going to be one 100-page test, please tell me. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: No. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Thank you. Okay. You're going to be able to give this test or assess mastery of this subject...you could do it, part of it in 5th grade, part of it 8th grade, wherever it...and that will allow you to even expand more on certain areas of that test enrichment area...okay, I just wanted to make sure it was not just one test, a hundred questions that... [LB14]

CORY EPLER: And even thinking about...it is a type of assessment, it is not the only one, so we think about performance-based assessments. So how do we...what is the measurement approach to really determining civic competence of our students? So there are multiple measurement pieces involved within that. So thinking about how do we ultimately assess something that's performance based. So we see this as one tool that a local school would be able to determine the best and most appropriate way to use it. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Um-hum, okay. So if a student wanted to write a paper on...that would be one way you would assess their understanding of what you're trying to teach them. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Correct. Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Linehan. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to Senator Ebke for pointing this out to me. So if we pass this, will social studies or history be part of the NeSA exams? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: No. [LB14]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: So we're still not going to do any statewide assessment. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: The bill, as written, would not require the development of a instrument like NeSA. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: So is there any plan to do an instrument like NeSA statewide assessment for history or social studies? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Currently there is not. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Thank you very much. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? So, Senator Krist started with a nice, neat little bill that said we're going to take a statewide test and it's going to be the test of naturalization, right? What's wrong with that? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Well, I think it goes back to the...thinking about quality instruction from a holistic perspective versus... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: We're not into holistic, we're into teaching children how to be Americans. What does holistic got to do with it? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I'm thinking about how we ensure that they're learning the foundational knowledge that's within the standards. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: So test them. That's how we find out. We don't take a poll. You said earlier, take a poll. Why not just test? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think that's one measure that we would be able to use to determine the level of civic competence. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: A poll? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: No, a test. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, let's do it. Let's pass LB14 as is. [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Again, I think it's one measure; I don't think it's a one-size-fits-all. And as written, it would... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: To know who Abe Lincoln is and he did and what George Washington isn't one-size-fits-all? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I'm referring to that in terms of the immigration and naturalization test. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: To know how many branches of government is isn't one-size-fits-all? That's on the naturalization test. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: To know who your senator is and how many senators you have, each state, isn't one-size-fit-all? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I'm referring to the assessment. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: The test. That's what's on the test. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: That are grounded within the social studies standards, yes. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: But this amendment, I don't mind any of it, what you added. I mind what you took out. What's wrong with "an informed, loyal, just, and patriotic citizenry is necessary to be a strong, stable, just and prosperous America." Why did you take that out? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: That would be a good question for...I would refer back to Senator Krist in terms of the concept there. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, I heard you guys wrote it..."and that he or she be in full accord with our form of government and fully aware of the liberties, opportunities, and advantages of which we are possessed and the sacrifices and struggles of those through whose efforts these benefits were gained," why would you take that out? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think, again, it goes back to ensuring that the pieces that were stricken are currently within the social studies standards. And like I heard from... [LB14]

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SENATOR GROENE: Well, your social studies standards should reflect what statutes this body passed, shouldn't it? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I believe that they do. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, then why did you take this out? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I can't speak to that. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions? Senator Morfeld. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Do...I already know the answer to this question, but I'm going to ask it for the record. Did the Department of Education create the immigration and naturalization test? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: No. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: So I've looked over the social studies standards before. And in fact, when they were being developed this last time around, I believe a few years ago, I took part in commenting on some of them, not in the public forum, but with some of the people that were developing them. They're much more comprehensive than what's encompassed in the naturalization test, aren't they? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Yes. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay. And so given the comprehensive nature of the social studies standards, particularly in reference to American history, to the American government, that one test might not necessarily...not even might not, it doesn't encompass all of the material learned and wouldn't necessarily be a perfect representation of whether or not the student mastered all of the content in the standards, correct? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay. And so I guess my mind is that this, to a certain extent, strikes the right balance in that this could be used as a tool. And I'm not discounting the fact that it's useful tool, I think it probably is. But it's not necessarily the only tool that should be used to ensure that there is mastery of the content (inaudible). [LB14]

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CORY EPLER: Correct. [LB14]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay. Okay. I just wanted to understand the position. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Would we be a lot smarter if we were all in attendance at that social studies conference and have a little better idea of the big pieces that you're talking about here today? [LB14]

CORY EPLER: I think that would be a great question for Senator Krist in terms of what he gained from being around and hearing the educators. I think that there was a lot of insights that were shared and a lot of passion from our teachers. And so, I would say perhaps. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yeah. I'm just worried about language that would get us back to, as was mentioned earlier, days of McCarthyism and Americanism misinterpreted compared to where we are trying to be, and hopefully will be, with the final result being active participation in our democracy by all. Thank you. [LB14]

CORY EPLER: Um-hum. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you, sir. Proponents? Any other proponents? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Good afternoon. For the record my name is Barry, B-a-r-r-y, Thomas, T-h-o-m-a-s. I'm the president of the Nebraska State Council for Social Studies. And I'm here as a representative for our board and our membership as a proponent for LB14 as amended by AM625. To start off, just understanding about our state organization: we are an affiliate of the National Council for Social Studies representing the state of Nebraska. We have a membership that is composed of elementary teachers in public/private and all different modes of education all the way up to high school, and it's also moving forward into postsecondary education. But it's not just a group of educators, it's a group of people who have an interest in teaching social studies. So we have a lot of museum curators; we have a lot of individuals that work within historical societies; geographic individuals that work within GIS technology that are members of our current membership and work as advocates for our board. So we have professional individuals who are working within the world of social studies, as well as teachers who are teaching those that we hope to be future professionals in the world of social studies that are part

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of our membership. We are responsible for our state organization for trying to strengthen the core of what we do with social studies throughout all of our school districts, all of our buildings, and all of our classrooms. We are trying to move social studies forward. There's a big movement going on currently throughout our country to where we're trying to focus not necessarily just on content, but also developing skills that align with the content that we're teaching. And so as we develop a content of understanding of, you know, the three branches of government, and who Abraham Lincoln is, we also want our students to be able to develop questions that will help them to understand the world around them. We want our students to be able to understand those continental skills and then also be able to do research and also to be able to look at and vet resources to make sure that they're using things that are dependable, which is an important skill moving forward. Our goal, with all of those things, is to get our students to...to get our students to where they are able to take informed action and communicate conclusions based off of facts that are vetted, trusted, and reliable that fits within our social studies curriculum. And so as we look at what is now the amended AM625 to LB14 we are a few...excuse me, we are huge advocates for a lot of the things that are written within that document. Speaking specifically, or pointing out specifically, now we have economics and geography, as well as history and government, as a part of what is expected in our social studies instruction throughout the entire state of Nebraska. As you have may have noted before, those two disciplines were not necessarily spoken to specifically in the previous statute. But now we have actual verbiage that goes along with supporting the instruction of those two very necessary and important parts of social studies instruction. So that's one thing that we are extremely pleased to see, that those things have been added, because those are huge parts of what we have within our social studies curriculum and our organization. We also like...we like the fact that we are trusting our state standards in what this document is writing...has been written to. It refers to, I believe on...I'm looking on page 2, line 15, "to develop a pride and respect for our institutions"...excuse me, it refers to Section 79-719 through 79-723 as a way to develop a pride and respect for our institutions and not to be mere recital of events and dates. Well, those statutes in there refer to our state standards that we have currently written...that are revised consistently and are kept up to speed with what we're trying to do to move social studies forward within our state. Most importantly, I think, for our organization, it looks at...I'm looking at the same page, lines 26 through 30 where it says: "to ensure that social studies curriculum utilizes instructional practices that support quality instruction in social studies education, including discussion of current events and controversial issues, service learning, simulations of democratic processes, classroom-based extracurricular activities, school governance, and field trips." As we've had this conversation about how we assess social studies, how we assess our students' understanding of history, geography, economics, and...excuse me, history, geography, economics, and...government...who I'm sitting in front of, forgive me. (Laughter) It's important to understand that the citizenship test that's been referred to throughout this hearing is an important component, because it does actually ask students to look at the content, look at the facts and have an understanding of it. But I think also further expanded within this is the looking at an application of the service learning,

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simulations of democratic processes. I know I have a friend in the building right now...or in the room right now from the Nebraska Bar Association where they do the We the People competition. And if you have not had an opportunity to attend that We the People competition, it's an opportunity for our students to look at our constitution, get really, really strong in the content and the words and the articles within it and then debate about the meaning of many of those different articles. So it's not just knowing the information, it's to be able to communicate what you understand about the information. And so we feel that that specific part is crucial to the moving forward of social studies within our school districts. And forgive me if I'm talking fast, I'm a bit nervous and I was given five minutes. And typically, if anyone knows me, I talk a lot and I talk a lot...I'm a social studies teachers so we...we're long winded some times. That being said, just moving forward, we would like to commend and thank Senator Krist for initially proposing the bill. Now I'll say the civics test, when it was proposed last year, became an issue, it became something of discussion within our organization, whether good or bad, if it's an accurate assessment, so on and so forth, and it germinated a lot of talk. But what we liked was that we had a state senator who was actually trying to find ways to get students to be more engaged in society, to be civic ready... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Could you wrap up? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I'm sorry. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Could you wrap up? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Oh, the red button. I didn't even see it. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: I gave you about an extra two already. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Oh, my goodness. Sorry. So that being said, we did participate in the social studies summit and we are happy to see that Senator Krist has taken the words and the action from that summit and put it into this amended part of this legislation. I do apologize for going over time. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: No, we were...you had something to say that was worth listening to. Thank you. Questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Thomas, thank you very much for being here today. And perhaps Senator Krist's example could be a case study in the future that you could use as far as political activity... [LB14]

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BARRY THOMAS: Absolutely. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: ...and making a difference in our state. So thank you for that. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Yes, sir. And the young ladies that started the conversation, to be honest with you. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Absolutely. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Linehan. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman; thank you, Mr. Thomas, for being here. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Are you teaching now? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I'm actually an administrator. Yes, ma'am. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Well, we're happy you're in the public schools. Would you have a problem if there was a NeSA test done--government, social studies? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I would not have a problem if there was a NeSA test for social studies, for government...but specifically to answer your question about government... [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Government...the whole social studies--American government, history, social studies, economics, and geography. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: There we go. You forgot the one I forgot. No, we wouldn't...I would say personally I...and I can't speak for our board in this regard. [LB14]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Personally, I would not have any opposition to a Nebraska state...excuse me, a Nebraska state assessment for social studies. [LB14]

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SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you very much. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Yes, ma'am. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Sir, in a democracy we have our public schools that were created by the people. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Yes, sir. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Parents, for children to be educated. If we give a test on civics, like the naturalization test, parents and the public who created those schools want to know if they know what it is to be an American. But there's another side to that question. We want to know if our employees, who are the social studies teachers, are teaching our children...just two people getting...two groups being judged here by this test. Are our employees giving information to the children that they know how it is to be an American? And then we are also testing the children to see if they learned the basics of our American government and our civic system. So my point is, why not test? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: And again, I didn't speak in opposition to that... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: But the naturalization test, what harm does it do? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I don't think it does a harm; I just...as I think has kind of been expressed here earlier, I think it's a limit if it's the only way that we measure how our students are going to...if it's a predictor of what our students end up doing in a democracy, I think it falls shorts of what we should be doing. I think it's a good baseline. I agree that there's good content that needs to be understood throughout our state. And I believe also that, I think with AQuESTT and every state having to be accountable to state standards and making sure that every state is responsible that the buildings and the teachers are going to be doing what the state standards require, I think we have that accountability because we're basing a lot of trust on our state standards. But in regards to the citizenship test, I personally don't think it's a bad thing. I honestly think that...though it does...it doesn't fulfill all of what we would expect. I don't know if a student who gets a 100 percent on that citizenship test is necessarily going to be a good neighbor... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: But... [LB14]

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BARRY THOMAS: ...or if they're going to, necessarily, go out and vote every time that they have an opportunity to, but we can try to do things within practice of giving kids an opportunity to work in student government and things like that that would help them out. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: I don't think...I don't think Senator Krist here, in his original bill, is trying to say that's how you pass civics. You can still have your curriculum; you can still do your civic duty, have a can drive; walk around the park with a colored shirt and cure something and take part as part of your civics lesson. That can be graded within the system. This is no different than taking the ACT or the SAT. This is a statewide test that says--are you prepared for college? Are you prepared to be a good citizen? I don't think Senator Krist is trying to have this test as the defining instrument that what grade you get on your report card. You think he is? [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: No, I...but I would say though, in response to what you said about if you pass government, the original legislation was drafted to where if you did not pass, you did not graduate. It was a mandatory... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: That's the part... [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: It was mandatory for you to be successful in that assessment in order to graduate. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: But you wouldn't have trouble with it if it was used like an ACT test or an SAT test that the people of Nebraska knew how prepared to go on from school our graduates are. If they're going to college with an SAT test how to become an American and run for the school board and run...because you know how important the freedom is. I guess that's what Senator Krist is after here. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I would take issue in the level of knowledge...the depth of knowledge that the questions are written at and see if that's a true measurement for SAT or ACT. The questions for them... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: I'm not comparing it to them. I'm just saying a different purpose. We're not comparing...I'm saying the SAT has an overall test purpose to see if our students are coming out of our public schools prepared to go on to college. What I'm saying is the naturalization test is just a general test to see if they're prepared to go on and be good citizens. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Okay. And I understand that. I just...again, I do question whether or not at the level that the questions are written, and this is more education jargon than anything else, but

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they're written really at a comprehension level and we are...our goals...well, education is not to just get our kids to comprehend, but they have to synthesize and apply that information. And I don't know if this...if we're talking about college, as written, I don't know if this is... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: We're not talking about college. I'm talking about a different standard here. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Again, drawing a comparison to ACT. I understand what you're saying. I just...I just...I do see the value in it, I just don't know if it's a proper way of saying this is what's going to be a good citizen is going to get a 100 percent on this. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: I understand your point. Thank you. Senator Ebke. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Would it be fair to say that your views of the citizenship would be sort of like a citizenship test as an instrument for telling whether or not somebody is ready for citizenship after they graduate or whatever, is sort of akin to saying that somebody is ready for algebra because they know their time tables? I mean, there's a foundation that's required for both of those things, but it doesn't necessarily tell you the whole...it doesn't necessarily say that you're ready or that you're capable of doing more advanced work. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: I think a better metaphor for me in this regard as far as the citizenship test, the citizens--or excuse me--to being a citizen and losing math, as the example, was just because someone can multiply doesn't mean I trust them to do my taxes. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: There you go. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: So it's just the application piece that I would be more...you know. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Better metaphor. Thanks. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you, sir. [LB14]

BARRY THOMAS: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: (Exhibits 3, 4) Any more proponents? Any more proponents? Were there any letters? There were two letters of support of LB14: John Gale, Nebraska Secretary of State; and Chad Dumas, Hastings Public Schools. Opponents to LB14? [LB14]

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RICHARD ZIERKE: My name is Richard Zierke, Z-i-e-r-k-e; I live in beautiful downtown Havelock. The first question on the citizenship test is what is the supreme law of the land? I'll let you answer that later. Any bill...LB14 by Senator Krist has the word America crossed out of it four times. None of the proponents that have visited with me...with you before this... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Sir, could I ask you...are you talking about the amendment or the original bill? [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: All the strikes, so I guess the amendment. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: The amendment; all right. So these are completely different. Thank you. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Yeah, the amendment. Okay. Thank you. The amendment. The gentleman that talked about...from the Department of Education kind of blew it a couple of times when you asked him, Senator Groene, how come you're not teaching the standards. And a lot of you have said, well, how come they're failing the test? And some of you surmise correctly that they're not teaching what they should be teaching, according to statute. So any amendment that has the word America...they're trying to change the language because they're not teaching it now. The pages of Nazism and Communism on page 4, line 11, which a couple of senators referred to, not teaching Nazism and Communism anymore, so I don't know if that's changed. There was a gentleman up here that said this was a McCarthy bill and everything has changed since then. In World War II, Nazism, the camps at Dachau and Auschwitz, I don't think those have changed. Those people are still not with us. And I think if you cross out Nazism and don't teach the evils of Nazism and Communism, what's the saying, we're doomed to repeat it. So this is all nice and good. It's a...like you said, Senator, if they just took the test is fine, but why cross out the rest? Why eliminate it? Each school board, this was another thing, putting control back into the authority of the school board. They cross out on page 7, Senator Krist does, starting with line 24, on page 4, line 24--"the superintendent of each school district in the state shall be held directly responsible"...page 4, line...it's the direct control there; Section 7 (sic: subsection (7))is all adopted. It's in there, and they're crossing it out. So, this thing should go down in flames. This should be a zero to eight vote out of this committee because it crosses out everything that is in 79-724, the guts of the amendment...or the guts of the law. When it comes to the other thing I was noticing, on page 3, on page 3, lines 16, 17, 18, and 19, it tells about reciting stories of American history. And they got the word "recite" (sic: "recital") crossed out and put "discussed" (sic: "discussion") in there about American heroes so the Gettysburg Address should be memorized--four score and seven, 157 words, doesn't seem that difficult to memorize. Oh, they took that out; they want that gone. What about the next one--"The Star-Spangled Banner," crossed out "an insistence" to every pupil to memorize it. I don't know if anybody has been on a

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school certification, school accreditation, do they actually ask a student to sing "The Star-Spangled Banner"? Oh, crossed out. Passion of teachers was commented on, crossed out. So would anybody like to ask me a question? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, sir. Senator Walz. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: I just didn't get...can you repeat who you are and what you do; I'm sorry. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Oh, sure. My name is Richard Zierke, United States Marine Corp., 1970-1974. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: And I live in Lincoln. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: And I'm a Nebraskan. So I'm not with all...I don't have titles or boards or anything like that. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. I just...I was sorry, I just missed it. Thank you so much. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Sure. Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Ebke. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: So are you content with the way that things are currently being taught in the schools? [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Oh, absolutely not. Because if they were, they wouldn't have to cross off...they just want to get rid of 79-724, they just want it gone. It's a pain and if it comes out of this committee and makes it to the floor, it's...in my estimation it won't make it out of committee. It should die right here. The test, all in favor of. I am, I mean, I am all in favor of the test. [LB14]

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SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions? [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: I do have another question. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Walz. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Sure. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: I'm just trying to get...understand. So you are just...you're in favor of making sure that everybody just takes that 100-question test? [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Sure, love the test. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: But the way this...I'm sorry, the amendment? Is that correct? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Um-hum. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Is written where it crosses out 79-724, guts the bill. This...you better get another one, get another number, because LB14 just should be gone, the legislative bill. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Um-hum. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Sure, I'm in favor of the test. [LB14]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Sir, have you read the original language of Senator Krist's bill? [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: The... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: LB14? [LB14]

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RICHARD ZIERKE: That's not this one? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: That's the amendment. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: No, I think what he's got is the original version of the bill there. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: I do have a...that says...starts with "it is the intent of the Legislature that the civics portion a naturalization test." [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: You're for that? [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: (Inaudible) top right-hand corner. That's the original. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: The original. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: You're for that? [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Sure. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Taking the test. You just don't want it amended with this amendment. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Yeah. Yeah. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: All right. Thank you. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you, sir. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Okay, wait a minute, the first question on the test is: What is the supreme law of the land? [LB14]

MULTIPLE SENATORS: The Constitution. [LB14]

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RICHARD ZIERKE: Some of you passed. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Appreciate your service to the country also, sir. [LB14]

RICHARD ZIERKE: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Next opponent? Could somebody...oh, she's trying; I'm sorry. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: Hope you don't mind, I brought my own chair. I can't sit in a moveable one safely. My name is Nancy Carr, C-a-r-r. And you do have a copy of my testimony, but after listening to all... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Could you spell your name? Did you spell your name? [LB14]

NANCY CARR: C-a-r-r. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't catch it. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: (Exhibit 5) That's all right. After listening to the comments, I do have some comments to make that aren't on my sheet. I think first of all, we need to define our terms. American History is not the same thing as social studies. Social studies just changed some...quite some time ago and is actually the teaching of socialism and social units and the way society works, a multi-cultural kind of thing rather than American History which is absolutely in the original bill in LB308. So the social studies, unfortunately, also have standards and those standards are what dictate everything. And those standards come from the federal government down to the state government down to the local schools and there really isn't any flexibility in them, although they insinuate that there is. So it's totally different to be teaching social studies than it is to teach American history. And we also used to teach geography as a course, too. And geography has greatly changed now. As I look in the kids' text books, it has to do with multiculturalism rather than true geography and not necessarily western America...or western hemisphere. So you're talking about two different things and if you try to compare them you're going to be in the wrong place. And I love the original bill, the LB308, I thought it was going to be first, so I was going to be here to testify on it because it is the way I was taught and, granted, that was a long time ago. But that is the way I became a patriot and a constitutionalist and an activist in government, because I know how important it is to be free and to live in a safe country. And those things I learned in school, all the stories about the heroes. We did memorize things; I still think that's important. So there's a great difference in not only subject matter today and the standards and the test that follow it as there is in the method and the way things are

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taught. So I was greatly disturbed, as other people...as the gentleman before me was, that that was taken out about the dangers of Nazism and etcetera. And if that was written today, you would add socialism. But there are dangers. Freedom is not free and if we don't fight for it all the time, there will be another power in there to take over. And so those warnings and those dangers are very important and children should know this. But first they're learning what America is and what it means to be an American so they're able to defend what they believe. And I notice the emphasis, and this is true, I noticed in the standards they have now it's foundational things are no longer important, it has to do with your experiential things and the things...community service and things you can do to show...that's not true. Everything needs a foundation. If you don't have it, it's going to fall down and it's the thing you build on. So it was important to teach our children, as was indicated in the statute that they become...they know what it is to be an American and then they become one. On my...see how I can go on...where I was when I came here. I said, as you heard in the testimony on LB308, because I thought that was going to be first, I'm in favor of the Americanism statute and its implementation in our schools, as required by the law. Unfortunately, LB14, as amended, if it would be passed, it would seriously weaken and even destroy the intent and purpose of the present statute. For one thing, Senator Krist wants to remove any penalty or responsibility from the school boards, superintendents, employees, and any appointed official who neglect or fail to carry out the provisions of the statute. And this is very important--a law with no means of enforcement is no law. And I thought they were so wise at that time to put an enforcement in because, actually, it's useless if it doesn't have some way to enforce it. Also, LB14 would replace the teaching of American history and American government, as required in the statute, with "social studies" and the standards for social studies and multicultural education, and those are already a part of Chapter 10 accreditation anyway. So you don't need to put them in again. The whole point of the statute is to require schools to teach distinctly American history and government to American citizens and to also teach and identify the harmful competing ideologies. LB14 would remove this language as well as the language that requires the teaching of the love of country to American students in Nebraska. All of these and many like changes Senator Krist proposed would completely destroy the force and meaning of this statute. I'm sorry I went over. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Thank you. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: I'm sorry, I went over. Are there any questions? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions from the committee? Senator Ebke. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: What enforcement mechanism are you talking about? [LB14]

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NANCY CARR: I'm talking about at the very end of the LB308, and I don't have that one with me. It talks about the...if the State Board of Education and the members of it and the high school...or the school board members and the superintendent do not teach these subjects then they can be removed from office. It's a pretty strong enforcement. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Have you heard of anybody having any enforcement done? [LB14]

NANCY CARR: No, first of all, there are very few Americanism committees and so... [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Well, I was on the school board for 12 years and I sat on the...it had been combined into the Americanism and curriculum committee, but we did...and we were an Americanism committee, but I think... [LB14]

NANCY CARR: Well, then I would have to go as a parent or a person and say I do not like the social studies subjects that you're teaching... [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Someone had...right. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: ...because they're not teaching Americanism. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Right. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: But I've never had an opportunity to do that. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Sure, sure. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: And that's why, if then proved that they were not teaching American history, then they could be removed from their position on the board, as well as the state board which is very good, too, because so much comes down from the state. [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Erdman. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Groene. Ms. Carr, thank you for coming in. On the last paragraph of your written testimony you gave us... [LB14]

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NANCY CARR: Yes, I didn't get to read that one. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: ...today's students are being indoctrinated in socialism, multicultural education, and global citizenship. [LB14]

NANCY CARR: Um-hum. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Did you describe for us what you meant by that statement? [LB14]

NANCY CARR: Well, I think the whole social studies curriculum is socialism. And I have looked at textbooks, I know what kids are learning. And also, they're emphasizing multiculturalism as the...which is globalism and they are teaching global citizenship, not American citizenship, but global citizenship. You cannot have allegiance to both of those and they'd be quite different to be a global citizen as well as being an American citizen. [LB14]

SENATOR ERDMAN: Thank you for your testimony and your comments, appreciate it. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you, Ms. [LB14]

DAVID LOSTROH: Senator Groene, Education Committee members, my name is David Lostroh, L-o-s-t-r-o-h. I'm testifying on behalf of the Nebraska Christian Home Educators Association. I don't have a written testimony to hand out because it's our belief that this bill does not apply to us. But since it was brought up earlier that maybe there is some intent to do that, I'm hereby testifying. As I said, it is our view that this amendment nor the original bill apply to home education. Since Senator Krist says it applies, we're concerned. We believe the bill is confusing. First it talks about public schools and school districts, and then later it applies this to private, parochial, and denominational schools. So looking at the bill itself (sic: the amendment), as we take a look at it, on page 2 at the top, page 2, on section 1 (sic: subsection (1)) it talks about the local school district needs to set up a committee of three to be the committee on American civic competence and engagement. Line 20, again it talks about the district, again with public school, has to use the civics portion and do something with it. But neither of these places does it talk about private schools or any kind of denominational or parochial school. Again, on the top of page 3, it talks about, line 1, it talks about the district, and this is public education. In line 5 of page 3, again, it talks about the school board doing things to implement this bill. But by the time we get down to line 13 on page 3, it says all grades of all public, private, denominational, and parochial schools shall, below the 6th grade, shall devote at least one hour per week to exercise or teaching periods for the following purposes. So to me it's confusing as to...is this bill really about public schools or private and denominational and parochial schools because no duty is

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given to them until you get down to line 3. And so when I looked at this bill and the original bill, I didn't think the original bill applied to home schools either, because it's pretty clearly for public education. Typically, when something applies to homeschools, as Senator Krist said, the language that's typically used is if a school that elects pursuant to Section 79-1601 not to meet accreditation or approval requirements. So since that language is not in here, I did not feel that I needed even to prepare a testimony. And so I believe that this bill does not apply to us at all, but just wanted to clarify that as written...I think it is very confusing. I have more reasons in my testimony for LB155, which follows, on exempt schools and our issues with adding curriculum requirements that if it's okay with the committee, I will go ahead and present them at that time, because I think it's so questionable that it applies to us I won't tie you up going through that and go through it twice. So if that seems reasonable, Senator Groene, I'll just do that. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions? Just going to wait? I would...I think Senator Ebke pointed it out that language in at least two of the three grades for the 5th grade to the 8th grade in all public...that's existing language that has been there for years. So if it didn't apply to you in the past, it doesn't apply to you now. [LB14]

DAVID LOSTROH: Okay. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: All right, thank you. Next opponent. [LB14]

PAM CARRIER: (Exhibit 6) Education Committee, I am Pam Carrier, P-a-m C-a-r-r-i-e-r. I am here as an opponent, but it's a very limited opponent because I'm finding myself on the opposite sides of the people I work with and I support what they say, generally, about the importance of civic education and government education. I am the state coordinator for the We the People program which is a law-related program under the state bar foundation. I'm a retired attorney and so after I retired I've been doing this for about seven years. The program has been around for about 30 years. It's the center for civic education out of California. It has curriculum for elementary, middle school, and high school. And Nebraska has been participating in it with the high schools, doing a competition once a year. And I bring in high schools, whoever wants to come from the state. And the winner of the competition goes to national competition. Just to give you an idea of the structure of We the People, because it's sort of an alternative assessment tool. There are six units in the book; the classroom is divided into six groups. The students learn all of the curriculum material, but then they are assigned one of the groups. They are given fairly intense inquiry-based questions; they prepare a four-minute answer to the question. And I have judges, I had 24 judges in January. These are Legislature people; these are former judges; they are attorneys; they're teachers; and they then...three of them listen to the students and then they have...after the four-minute presentation, they do a six-minute question and answer. One of the keys with We the People program is that we're teaching critical thinking and we're trying to

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expand the program across the state and provide professional development for teachers. I think one of the keys of...that has always been with the We the People program and it was started with U.S. government, Department of Education funds and those funds lasted until 2010 and then they were pulled as a earmark. We always would...the teachers that then use the We the People program we would provide them with professional education on how to do the We the People program and we would provide them with books to use in their classrooms so they get a box of...classroom...for the classroom books. That program went out in 2010 from federal funding, but most recently it came in under new federal funding through the Seed Grant and we are providing teacher professional education to teachers in schools that have high-needs students. So we are...and we've had people from Cody-Kilgore, so we're all over the state. We have Omaha; we have Lincoln; we have the Kearney area, and we're continuing to provide that education. But it does give the teachers, then, the ability to teach these premises on the constitution in a much more in-depth assessment. I am against the idea of the naturalization test, other than maybe as an initial test that kids take when they start civics to find out what they don't know. If we say they should learn this in 5th grade, you give this in 9th grade and say how'd you do? And they find out they didn't do it well, then that says to them, oops, and maybe to their parents, oops, we need to start thinking about this. So as a baseline, maybe, but I don't think that it, in any way, it's more of a regurgitation because all of the questions are on-line. If they can take it over and over and over, it's really just a regurgitation of facts that they...if they don't understand how checks and balances work, it's not going to help them. If they don't know what the three branches of government does and why, it's not going to help them. If they don't know why we have We the People, what started that, they aren't going to know how important it is. So to the extent we are promoting the naturalization test as even a baseline, I think we need to get away from it, but I like the amended bill and the emphasis on social studies and it's just key. The kids have to do a service-learning project and it should be more than just going out and collecting food for the local food bank. They need to understand how they look at policies and then go to the legislative bodies and make a difference like the schools have done. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Thank you. Questions? Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming, Ms. Carrier. Having had three children go through We the People and understand the intensity of that, I'm really glad that you spoke because I've had trouble sort of understanding...trying to weigh the intensity of a program and the comprehensive nature of what is taught under that program versus a test. And certainly, if this is what we're going to hold up as a standard, I hear people keep saying it's a base, so that's fine; I agree, it could be used to show what people don't know. I guess my question is, how many...what percent of the kids in Nebraska participate in We the People, do you know? [LB14]

PAM CARRIER: I don't know. Prior to me, they've trained some teachers. I continue to train teachers; I'm getting more and more teachers to get involved. The number of people coming to

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the state competition has not significantly increased; it steadily increases. I do now have all but one of the Lincoln public schools participating, which is a big step. You heard from Barry Thomas, so I know he's in support of it for the Omaha public schools. We will be having a teacher institute this summer that I hope we can get more of those students. I'm targeting Winnebago and some of those schools--Kearney, Schuyler, etcetera. I'm hoping a lot of these teachers take it and use the book and the concept in the classroom. And they may choose because of distance, we have somebody from Holdrege coming every year but, because of distance, a lot of schools just say--we can't add that to our curriculum. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Well, the intensity and comprehensive nature of We the People is so significant that I hope people will add that, too, as well, so (inaudible). [LB14]

PAM CARRIER: Maybe we'll do a regional competition and that would help, yeah. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Yeah. Gosh, maybe we should have a bill that says...requires We the People. [LB14]

PAM CARRIER: The teachers that take it are excited about it. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you for your testimony. [LB14]

PAM CARRIER: You bet. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Next opponent. [LB14]

MAXWELL SMITH: My name is Maxwell Smith, M-a-x-w-e-l-l S-m-i-t-h. Forgive me, but this is the first time speaking at such an event, if I act nervous (laughter), but the sad truth is students are not being taught very well. There's a reason why nearly 80 percent of students are failing our own citizenship test. I've been in school many years and I think I know multiple reasons why. We're being taught globalist ideas and we're not being taught about America; we're not being taught about the importance of why our country became what it was. I mostly know because, being young, my grandfather always told me stories and explained to me what it was like way back. He told me about the stories of his father coming back from World War II. The patriotism is still there; the blood is still on our soil on land and sea and on foreign lands...that we still have veterans that lived and many of that died, but we are not being taught this in our classes. LB14 is extending many of these issues, in my opinion. We're already being, as you can see in the

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original bill LB308, LB14 is cutting out many of the things that we've already followed before, that we no longer sing "The Star-Spangled Banner." We no longer know our presidents' birthdays, or the heroes, the American heroes. For that reason I strongly oppose LB14 because it's not going to further our education. It's, in many ways, it's only getting worse. Unless we follow it back onto LB308 and start teaching what it is to be an American...that's the only way that we'll succeed. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Maxwell, thank you...Mr. Smith, for being here and having this opportunity today. Could you mention where your attendance is as far as school, high school? [LB14]

MAXWELL SMITH: I go to Southeast High School. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Southeast. And do you think that's universally accurate that they're not teaching anything but globalism, as you mentioned? [LB14]

MAXWELL SMITH: Yes, sir. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: The whole social studies department or the school as a whole or...how do you see that? [LB14]

MAXWELL SMITH: In...I've seen all the books in many schools and I can tell you now that a majority of schools in Nebraska are teaching about the same thing. And which ends up the same result and why we have 80 percent of students that cannot pass our own citizenship test. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay, thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming, Mr. Smith. So what year are you? [LB14]

MAXWELL SMITH: I'm a freshman. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Okay, so you haven't seen the We the People class yet. [LB14]

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MAXWELL SMITH: I've looked over their syllabus and what they teach and I have many friends that have told me all about it and my sister went through it, and it helps. Honestly, I think it's a very good class, but it still isn't helping as much as I think we really could if we focus more on Americanism and it being...what it is to be an American and more so than just a single class. [LB14]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Okay. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Kind of sad to see a young man say what it was, not what it is--America. Thank you for your testimony. Any other questions? Thank you. Next opponent. Any more opponents to LB14? How many more are testifying on LB14? Opponents or proponents? Try to get up as quickly as somebody leaves so we can...don't be shy. [LB14]

TOM NEBELSICK: Should I be there now? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Be in line. Thank you. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: Hello. My name is Bob Blank, I live at...I'm the political action committee director. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Could you spell your name. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: B-l-a-n-k. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: Yes. Political action committee director for Nebraskans for Founders Values. I have come today because at Nebraskans for Founders Values, we sent out a survey of Freedom of Information survey request to 485 educational units, might have been 486, whatever it was at the time, we sent it out and those that didn't respond the first time we sent another request out about the Americanism Committee, about statute 79-724 through 726. We also sent one to the Commissioner of Education. These are the responses that we got, there were 126 that responded out of the 485. That's about...a little more than 25 percent. And what we found is that what these people have testified to, including our last witness, is true. It's not being taught. And to surmise that because it's in the law, and it is in the law, that it's being taught is incorrect. We found that 28 people didn't have an Americanism committee at all out of the 126, that 98 people had a committee, but almost all of them either had too many people on the committee, too few people on the committee, or they didn't have a real meeting. They appointed people from the school

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board to be on this committee. And when the board meeting was over, they said, now the Americanism Committee is going to meet, do we have any new business? They'd say no, do we have any old business? And they'd say no. And they'd say okay, and they'd slam it down and that would fulfill the requirement. Almost all of them, no outline on Americanism curriculum. So they had no curriculum. A 115 out of the 126 had no Americanism curriculum. And when I hear the witnesses testify that 80 percent of the people don't know common answers to the questions, it's not surprising here in Nebraska because they're not being taught that. We encourage the people to teach that, we sent out encouragements for them to do that. When it came back to us that most of them didn't...that there was no change in the status quo. Now in your amendment, you take out 79-727. That provides that anyone who doesn't do that is guilty of a Class III misdemeanor. And if you go to 79-724, which I have right here, it lists the order where people are held responsible for not doing this in an individual educational unit situation. And if you have a law that nobody is following, or that isn't being followed very much, the last thing you want to do is water down the law or take out any teeth that the law has. And that's exactly what this amendment does from Senator Krist, it takes out the teeth. The very last line of his amendment repeals 79-727, which is the criminal statute. So there's no reason for people to follow this bill. They're not following it now with the criminal statute. For them to follow it without it is absurd. We've just finished an election. I personally believe that it was a referendum on Americanism or socialism. And there are a lot of issues that were involved there, but, basically, that was it and America picked Americanism. And Nebraskans picked Americanism. The bill that's being taught here, the amendment that's being projected here should not be put on the floor of the Legislature but, in fact, there's another amendment that's coming up that I'll testify on later that needs to pass and it would require some accountability. Because as the law stands right now, it tells them what they need to do, but there's no accountability. They need to have...they need to be required to hold meetings; they need to be required to have minutes of those meetings. There has to be some accountability, and there isn't any. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was glad...thank you very much for coming today. And from the returns that you had on the number of staff that sent in responses, do you know what the spread would be as far as Class A, B, C, or D, the size of the school and district that they're in? [LB14]

BOB BLANK: I don't have that here. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: You didn't ask for that in their return address or anything like that? [LB14]

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BOB BLANK: I don't know that we don't know. I don't have that in my compilation here. But I do have...and I'd be happy to make copies of this and provide it to you. I do have everyone who responded here and everyone who didn't respond. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Are they listed by school as far as...? [LB14]

BOB BLANK: They're listed by educational units. So Omaha Public Schools is an educational unit. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: By school district then. They're listed by school district. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: Yes. I know what you're saying, but...I got the list from the State Board of Education and they were identified as educational units and that's who we followed up with. Now that included parochial schools, private schools, as well as the public schools. [LB14]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. Thank you. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: Thank you, sir. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Sir, did you know you can get a hold of the Attorney General's Office if somebody does not reply to a FOIA, they will follow up? [LB14]

BOB BLANK: We did get a hold of the Attorney General's Office when Jon Bruning was the Attorney General, and we got no response. And they did not take any action. We asked them to require these people to follow the law. And for whatever reason, they didn't do that. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: I think you would find the new Attorney General would follow up. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: We would hope so. I haven't contacted the current Attorney General. That's an excellent idea though. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: So existing law says the school board "shall" appoint a committee of three to be known as a committee of Americanism. And it says that committee "shall" inspect and approve all text books used in the teaching of American history and civil government in the schools. Such text books shall adequately stress...so do you believe We the People, that our

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school boards and our administration is not setting a good example to our students by not following existing law? [LB14]

BOB BLANK: I believe, after seeing the results of our request, I believe that the school boards, for the most part, are not following the results of the existing law. And I believe there was only...of all of them that we sent out, there were only one or two that made an honest effort, for lack of a better term... [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, sir. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: ...to follow that law completely. And the rest of them, most of it was just nothing, I mean, they just...the bare minimum, and not having an Americanism curriculum when it is clear in the law that that's required. And if you look down on line 24 on page 4, as you were talking about, the State Board of Education may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations, and they may not. When you look at the old law, they had to do that, there was no two ways about it. But in the new law, in the proposed amendment, they don't have to do it. They may or they may not, depending on themselves; and apparently, from what we have seen, they don't, even though by law they're supposed to. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, thank you. Any other questions for the testifier? Thank you, sir. [LB14]

BOB BLANK: Thank you. [LB14]

TOM NEBELSICK: Good afternoon, my name is Tom Nebelsick, T-o-m N-e-b-e-l-s-i-c-k. Like Mr. Smith, this is the first time I've ever done anything like this, so forgive me if I struggle a little bit. I'm here to testify, on behalf of myself, against the amendment, AM625. And this is going to be short and sweet. I believe this bill would be damaging to the process of promoting Americanism. I said bill, I meant amendment. I do believe that, in addition, it would actually promote socialism. And so I strongly oppose AM625. Thank you for your time. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, sir. Are there any questions for the testifier? Thank you. [LB14]

TOM NEBELSICK: My pleasure. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Next opponent. [LB14]

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KATHRYN DILLOW: (Inaudible) in neutral? (Inaudible). [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: (Exhibit 7) Is there any other opponents? You can go ahead and take the chair. There was one opposition, Nebraska State Education Association. Go ahead, Miss. Now, neutral? [LB14]

KATHRYN DILLOW: Neutral. Kathryn Dillow, it's K-a-t-h-r-y-n D-i-l-l-o-w. I'm here on behalf of Nebraska Homeschool, which is a homeschool group based in the Omaha area. And like Mr. Lostroh, I had not intended to speak to this bill, but when I heard the introduction comments that perhaps this might include exempt schools, I felt compelled to speak. This particular piece of legislation, with amendments, is infused with state regulation of education from school district authority, teacher certification, and State Board of Education oversight. None of that pertains to exempt schools. Per 76-1601, we have elected to be exempt from all laws and regulations pertaining approval and accreditation by the state of Nebraska, as well as the rules and regulations that are promulgated by the State Board of Education. So I just wanted to make a point of clarification on that, that when I talk to the Department of Education and they refer to the approved and accredited schools, the accredited schools are the public schools. The approved schools are the private, denominational, and parochial schools who choose to be under state regulation, not inclusive of exempt schools. I also wanted to make a comment regarding the bill itself. I do want to speak on this neutrally. I, myself, am a retired Lieutenant Colonel of the United States Air Force. I'm the daughter of a Korean War veteran. And I'm married to a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel. I get this. I want our youth to be educated. I want them to understand what it means to be a citizen of the United States of America, to defend this nation, and to love it. That is one reason that I chose to homeschool because I have a unique opportunity to then spend more time on the things I hold dear and to teach with passion and instill values to love the things that are important. I heard it said earlier that things are getting marginalized. They may even be neglected or forgotten if we don't teach the values of loving what it is to be American and to be a citizen of this nation and what it affords us. I do want the public school students to be afforded an opportunity to hear and learn what it means to be an American and to understand that, to embrace it, to become civically engaged. These peers are the same as my children; they're going to work together. They're going to then engage the culture together. They may even marry my children. I want our public-educated students to benefit from knowing. However, I do not think that the amendments of this particular piece of legislation is going to answer that need. I have more faith in the We the People program than I do what this piece of legislation would do. But I also ask, why aren't they doing the things that are proposed in this legislation already? What's stopping the public schools from doing it? Why can't they create an environment inside the school that puts relevance and importance on Americanism and citizenship, not social studies? But why can't we go ahead and create all the things of extracurricular activity involvement that promote these opportunities? I think they can. And again, that's one reason I homeschool, because I'm free to run amok, if you say, and do these things with my kids. I have

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them write to their senators. I have them get involved and do campaigns. I take them to the events with me. I let them campaign for senators, work with a PAC, and go to camps that run mock legislations. It's awesome, they love it. And they do understand the importance of this. I do think that we can do a little more in our public schools for that. And that, mainly, is my conclusion regarding this particular bill. I do have more. I do want to emphasize, however, that there are many issues that, if you attempt to include an exempt school in a piece of legislation that it doesn't belong in, we open the door for many more issues. And I will address those when we talk about LB155. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions? Have a lot of immigrant children in our schools. Do you think we're doing them a service by not knowing how blessed they are and the rights they have and the sacrifice that others did to give the freedoms that their parents struggled so hard to come here for? [LB14]

KATHRYN DILLOW: No, sir. I think we're...we are doing them a disservice. They need to hear this. We were...my family, we were stationed...not stationed, but we were in Japan as missionaries. We didn't have the option of going to American schools, so I've experienced Japanese schools. I've experienced mission schools. I've experienced homeschool abroad. I am a second generation homeschooler. I never dreamed that I would homeschool my own children, but this is where I am because I see the need. And when we were in Japan, that was something that was constantly emphasized to us. We were taught the "Star-Spangled Banner," we were taught the stories of the American heroes. And we were in the foreign land. It's because our parents didn't want us to forget. So when we did come home from the mission field, my dad's words were: this is the most blessed nation on earth, don't forget it. And I agree with him. And I think we need to make sure that whoever comes to this nation, whether they're a refugee, an immigrant, or whether they're born here, they know that, they understand that. We hold our heads with pride. And I don't say with a pompous attitude that I'm prideful, I hold my head with pride because we are blessed; and with that we can do so much for everybody. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions for the testifier? Thank you. Any other neutral testimony? [LB14]

ELLE HANSEN: Good afternoon, members of the Education Committee. My name is Elle, spelled E-l-l-e, last name Hansen, H-a-n-s-e-n. I find it concerning that not one single opponent of this bill is an educator. And what...Senator Ebke, you're an educator, correct? [LB14]

SENATOR EBKE: Um-hum. [LB14]

ELLE HANSEN: Senator Kolowski, you've worked in education, correct? [LB14]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, I did. [LB14]

ELLE HANSEN: Anyone else on the committee? [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: You're not supposed to ask the committee questions, but go ahead.
(Inaudible) Go ahead. [LB14]

ELLE HANSEN: Yeah, it is a public hearing and I am going to exercise my First Amendment to free speech. We have people walking into these rooms who think that they know what's right and think that they need to dictate. I would say I'm probably a little bit guilty of that myself. However, it's unfortunate that the citizenship exam doesn't include what happened before Nebraska became a state, what happened before the United States was colonized. I'm a Native American and I'm really concerned that people think that in order to be an American they need to know these things, and these things only, to the exclusion of all of the rich history and culture that was here before the people got off the boats. I'm a member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and this concerns me. Additionally, to see a student get up in opposition to this bill, who hasn't finished even his first year of education in the high school, who thinks that he knows better than his teachers to get up and say that he's not learning the things that he needs to? I'm asking myself the question why is...maybe if that child were in school he would learn the things that he needs to. I don't know. I'm gravely concerned about the use of language. In fact, that's why I came to the Capitol this afternoon. It seems like there's some hostility coming from the Chairman of this committee toward individuals who, maybe, differ. I mean, these are not things that say that education is important to me, because even people with differing opinions can be respectful to each other. And I think that that's one thing that I learned a great deal about around here. I don't do it perfectly, and I'll be upfront about that. My biggest concern is that...we have also have students that are not capable of taking a pen-and-paper test. My best friend is blind, I mean, there's nothing enforcing the schools to provide it in Braille. There's...and obviously, our schools are wonderful and they will do that. However, there are some students who aren't capable of understanding these concepts who are identified and have 504 plans that could possibly not meet the standard, whether it's in this bill or any other similar bill, in order to complete their high school education. And I don't think that they should be marginalized or excluded based on that premise either. I think it's ablest; I think it's ridiculous. I think it's all ridiculous. I think the fact that we're trying to dictate what it means to live on this country, when this land belongs to none of us, is erroneous on its face. Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions for the testifier? Thank you. Any other neutral testimony? There are no letters in neutral. Senator Krist, would you like to close on LB14?
[LB14]

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SENATOR KRIST: (Exhibit 8) Yes, I would. The mention...will one of the pages take this, please? The mention that NSEA came in on opposition, I'm giving you a letter from them saying that that's not the case. After the amendment was filed, you have a copy of it now, that they're supporting it with the amendment attached to it. First of all, I want to go back to, probably, a philosophical premise of this committee hearing. You asked several times, in different ways, why--and so did the testifiers--why is not the Department of Education and all of our common schools of the state teaching to a level that is in the Americanism statutes. This committee that formed themselves and studied it decided that one of the basic problems in this state is Americanism is over here and the social studies standards are over here. And the two of them need to come together. And that's what this amendment does in some ways. If it's not strong enough, then I'd be happy to talk about that. But Americanism was written in 1949. You all know what was going on in 1949. Certain members of an ethnic population, a religious population could not get a job in this state. Things have changed since 1949. And the Americanism clause...statutes need to be updated in some way. The kids that are sitting behind from Elm Creek, and I'd ask them to just stand for you and identify themselves, those are the heroes. They took everything that was in statute, everything that was here and they said: you know what, we were inspired by our trip to Washington, D.C., and not only do we want to go to that extra level and teach it, but all 23 members of the Elm Creek school district...or high school had to pass this test to graduate high school. They did that internally. The school board did that for them, the parents cared about them enough to make sure that they did that. The bill is about all schools. If there's a testing standard out there, whether you're doing it at home, whether you're doing it parochially, or doing it privately, there are standards that are set within the social studies area. And again, those social studies standards have not been tested comprehensively when it comes to civics, that's what this bill is all about. I have to say one other thing for the record. I spent 21 years in the Air Force defending the right for everyone to come up here and say exactly what they wanted to say. But to question my patriotism by saying I've removed the word "American" out of this amendment...I think when you come up here, and this bill has been on file with an amendment for at least a week, at least talk about the right amendment. And when you reference that we've taken Americanism out, we took it out in the first...if you refer to page 2, line 5, American civic...lines 4 and 5, "American civic competence and engagement" replaces "Americanism." That's a whole different name for an organization that says we're going to take American civic competence and engagement seriously. The only other reference of taking Americanism out is to call it "the committee" as opposed to "the American committee." So I respect the fact that anyone can come up here and say whatever they want to say, but let's stay factual. Let's talk about the amendment, AM625 to LB14, and let's talk about civic engagement. Actually, there was one other thing I wanted to talk about. I want to be as respectful as I can. When you learn how to fly an airplane, you first have to learn where the cord line is, where the angle of attack is, where the center of gravity is, what's the thrust to weight ratio, and then you can learn to fly. You can be experiential; you can fly it upside down, inside out, be the best fighter pilot in the world. We the People is still built upon fundamentals. And if we don't teach

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our kids fundamentals, those are the things that are in the naturalization test and can be added very well, they're not going to be able to fly, not even straight and level. Thank you for your attention. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, Senator Krist. Any questions for the senator? I tried to straighten people out the difference between your bill and the amendment when I could. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: I know, I appreciate that. But I would say if you find it palatable to attach it to the education bill, that's great. If not, I'd still like it kicked out. This is my priority bill for next year if it doesn't have any success this year. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you. [LB14]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? That ends the hearing on LB14. Senator Brasch will now open with LB155. Five-minute break. We're going...as people rearrange themselves in the building. [LB14]

BREAK

SENATOR GROENE: I'm going to have to leave here in a little bit to present a bill, so Senator Kolowski will be taking over as Vice Chair. So if Senator Brasch would like to present LB155. How many testifiers...well, let's wait until they get back in the room. Why don't you do that when we...go ahead, Senator Brasch, we're ready. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: (Exhibit 1) Ready? Okay. Thank you, Chairman Groene and members of the Education Committee. My name is Lydia Brasch, spelled L-y-d-i-a B-r-a-s-c-h, and I represent the 16th District in the Nebraska Legislature. I come before you today to introduce LB155. This bill would require, as amended, that to graduate from a public high school in Nebraska every student must correctly answer 70 percent of the questions from the U.S. citizenship and naturalization test that America requires immigrants to pass before they become U.S. citizens. Before I introduced this bill in January, I spoke with Senator Krist, due to the similarities in our original bills. His bill applied only to the public schools and mine, originally, applied to all students. However, since introducing LB155, my office and I held meetings with many homeschooling families and organizations and read many e-mails expressing concerns. I've learned that the state of Nebraska places no curriculum requirements upon homeschoolers and it is not my intention to change that with this bill. I also learned that many parents homeschool

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their children because they are concerned that subjects like American history and American government receive literally, relatively little attention in our public schools. Since speaking with numerous homeschool parents who emphasize these subjects, I do not believe this bill should apply to homeschools. Moreover, the original bill also applied to private, parochial and denominational schools, but again, I don't want to mandate testing requirements to them either since they, too, are currently exempt from testing requirements, especially since many of those schools voluntarily elect to take some form of standardized tests. My hope is that if this bill becomes law, it will raise a greater awareness of the need for all citizens to have at least some basic knowledge of our government. Otherwise, how can they be an informed voter or, at the very least, an informed citizen who knows their rights under our laws? The main reason I introduced this bill is because of the information I read on-line in a letter to the editor by three high school girls from Elm Creek, Nebraska. And I believe they were here earlier, I don't know if they're still here. And they asked five Nebraska high schools to give the citizenship test to their juniors and seniors. And over 80 percent of them failed. If a large majority of students in five Nebraska high schools, who are currently immersed in the curriculum of American government, cannot pass this requirement that we have for immigrants, then I believe we have a problem that needs to be addressed legislatively. Those girls went on to say that their high school now requires the test to graduate. And I've learned, just in this committee, that 15 other states also require the test to graduate from high school; and perhaps Nebraska should be number 16. To be clear, I do not see this requirement as the latest educational fad with which Nebraska should jump on board with, rather I see this test as a simple baseline requirement. It's not the pinnacle of completing a course in American government, nor should it be the most information that citizens should be expected to know about our government or the country in general, simply stating 70 questions--getting them correct out of 100 questions of the naturalization test--does not mean a citizen will have a deep and abiding knowledge of the laws and institutions that uphold our republic. In fact, it only scratches the surface, but it's a start. There are many questions on the test that bring up important topics that I hope will be of interest to every student who takes the test and will be the inspiration for them to read and investigate and want to learn more about those topics. In closing, if immigrants are required to know this content before becoming citizens, then at least citizens who grow up in America and who are educated here should know this content. This is a requirement, I believe, that will help lead to a more educated voting public who know some basic facts about government that belongs to them. If you haven't taken the test on-line, there's many forms. Even the 100-question test takes merely 15 minutes. I made sure my husband took the test verbally while driving home from church yesterday. And it's been a long time since he's had high school government classes; and yes, he passed. There were a few I had to coach him and help him with the answers, but it's a fun test to give to others. I also want to address the woman that came up here talking about the Native American information. And if you look at that test, it does ask you to name at least three of the tribes that are Native Americans here. And I also do believe that the many Native Americans who live in the reservations, it's a sovereign state, and I don't believe they are required to know American history or pass the test, that they are a sovereign

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nation. And in concluding my testimony today, there has been a lot of information that's come forward. I do believe that this civics test should stand alone and not have the Americanism snippets put into it, that that is also a very important piece of what is already in law. I just have amendments for it that I believe will strengthen it and make it more transparent. Are there any questions on LB155, on the civics exam part? [LB155]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? Senator Brasch, do you see why anybody would be opposed that American citizens, our youth, take the same test as somebody who went through a lot of stress, a lot of adversity to come to this country and become a citizen? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: No, absolutely not. I believe that this is not a burdensome test. And I believe that every generation has gotten further and further away from our foundation as a country. My parents came here in their 30s as immigrants from the Ukraine. And they were required to take the test. They studied American history. We studied American history. We knew about the hardships and what...that they experienced. And when you use the word "social studies", you know, my grandparents, they were a part of the era where they were farmers. Stalin put their eyes out, sent them to Siberia, tried to kill any living heirs--my father, my brothers, because of Socialism. They wanted to turn all farmland into colhoez, c-o-l-h-o-e-z, I believe, (sic--kolkhoz) which are community farms, that there was no ownership of individuals. So I cringe a little at how diluted the Americanism bill has come and how you want to change American history or civics into social studies. I think that's something that we, as a country, want to move away from and not closer to. [LB155]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Senator Morfeld. [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Thank you, Chairman Groene. You know, I just want to put on the record, and I heard some of the earlier testimony while I was in my office catching up on something quick, about social studies, I mean, the definition...and this is the Merriam Webster's definition of social studies is various aspects or branches of the study of human society considered as an educational discipline. So I don't understand how we're conflating social studies with socialism, it's two completely different things and two completely different terms and I just want that on the record. Second, I...so, I guess, you know, it's interesting, I do a lot of this work on civics for my day job. And I hear a lot of people say that, you know, I feel like, particularly my generation, and perhaps maybe the generation below me, has really strayed far away from our civic life. And in fact, studies show that young people actually care more about service to their civic society than they do the traditional forms of civic participation that our parents participated in which is political parties because they see that as not being very fruitful but rather service to their community. So if you look at the studies, that actually shows that young people are more civically engaged than ever; they're just engaged in different ways. So tell me...can you

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tell me a little bit about why you think that we've started...why people are less civically in tune, particularly this generation? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Again... [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Because you alluded to that a little bit. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: It is, and it's American history. It's knowing...and when you saw the five young students here and you see other students, they have moved away from the knowledge of why our country was formed, the independence, Declaration of Independence, our constitution. [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Do you have any studies to back that up or is that just your inclination? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: I believe we can offer you some information on that. [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Okay, I'll follow up. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: And I believe that the testifier that we had before talked about the surveys they took on the educational service units and what was being taught and what was being learned. But that is something that as far as a study, I don't have it readily. [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: I'd be interested in seeing that data. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Yeah. But we could look at what studies have been done. But as far as volunteerism and different issues, if you're talking bad about...it depends on how you define engagement. Are they engaged in a political process? We see, according to the Secretary of State's Office, a declining number of voters, people who actually turn out to vote. I believe that is a reflection of the lack of American history and Americanism; where we have a duty to vote and participate in our government. When you did not have the freedom to participate in a government and you didn't have your Bill of Rights, you'll see a difference between the generations. My parents, veterans, others who have been engaged, you know, and knowing how other lands do not have the freedom, do not have the rights, I believe they're more engaged voters and that perhaps we will see more people turning out to vote, to participate in government. It's hard to find people to run on local government. It's hard, in some cases, to find someone that will run for a Legislature. I know I believe that interest has been so far removed, and I don't think we should dilute that. And we are talking a simple civics test. I would love everyone on...it's available on-

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line. Look at the questions. It's been a long time since I've had an American government class.
[LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Yeah, and I guess...I guess my concern with the test is, I don't have too much of a problem with the test, I just think that...that's the problem, it's just a simple test. And I don't think that somebody memorizing, which is what this is going to turn into in most cases, if somebody memorizing a bunch of facts as a young kid is going to get any people any more involved civically. Rather, I would rather the focus be on what some of the people had talked about earlier, the We the People folks and other...focus on substantive civic engagements.
[LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: May I respond? [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: In a second, I'll finish here. And substantive civic engagement is critically thinking about what are some of the issues in my community? How do we have civil discourse around it? And then how do we critically think about solutions and then go and do something about it? That to me is the importance of engagement, because that's what is going to lead to understanding the importance of voting and other types of civic participation, not memorizing whatever history fact, that doesn't...to me that does not lead to civic engagement. So, that's just my take. I think we're trying to get to the same place; we just have two views of how to get there. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: And may I respond? [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Sure. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: And the...you know, and I appreciate what you're saying. But I do believe that when you read the test and see some of them...the questions are very instructional as what are the roles of your representatives, who are your representatives, and it reaches into all levels of government. And it also lets people know what their rights are that, you know, you have individual rights and those are part of the questions. And I believe, as I said earlier, that those key questions may be that "ah-ha" moment of I don't know what I don't know and may engage a student into wanting to reach out and learn more and not...that the questions are basic, but they refer to key components of...and including who are the tribes in our country. It lists several of them and you identify three it said. [LB155]

SENATOR MORFELD: Yeah, I totally get it. I teach American government on a college level. I just think that students walking away with a dynamic understanding of American government

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and not just focusing on memorization of facts is the way we should go. But that being said, we're trying to get to the same place. We're just getting there in different ways. And I appreciate that, Senator. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Senator, thank you for bringing this forward. I just want to speak up as Senator Morfeld did about the placement or your comment about socialism and social studies. We could go back decades, if not centuries, and look at high school handbooks that I am very familiar with, where the listing of...let's just say science...you have biology, you have chemistry, you have physics, you have human physiology, and on and on, all the courses that are available. Social studies is nothing more than a title just like science is a title. It has nothing more to do with socialism than science has anything to do with socialism. And then the naming of history, geography, the behavioral sciences, civics, government, are all under that title of social studies nomenclature. And having been in that world and worked in that world for most of my adult life, I just personally take that aback, that identifying socialism to social studies is beyond my comprehension right now. So I just had to say that. I just want you to understand where I'm coming from on that. And I hope...and your background and your history and your family and I've been to some of the countries you're talking about. And yes, Nazism was terrible, Communism was terrible, all those things that we have examples of. But what Senator Morfeld is talking about gets way beyond just the simple memorization of names and dates and places again. If we look at analysis and synthesis and evaluation, the highest levels of problem solving and decision making and critical thinking, we're talking about a whole different world than your social studies classes or those history classes or whatever they might be, get you there to talk about issues and situations in our past that we spend great time on. And I know teachers that you would be amazed by that...how they tie that all together and I hope that would be...it's the direction we think about things rather than having a name connected with something that we all despise of socialism compared to other situations. Now, even socialism has its different banks, as you all know. Many of our European allies have very heavily socialist delivery system of a lot of their services. So I wouldn't want to start blaming them or naming them into that block of negativism, if that's the case. So I'll stop there. Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Would you like me to respond? [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Sure, go ahead, anything you want. [LB155]

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SENATOR BRASCH: I appreciate your response, and I would say that we have many fine educators in the...in what you were calling social studies under one umbrella or field of study. And what I'm hoping is that we see American history in America at the pinnacle of all studies. That to say that it's not negative in our country to be socialistic when we've seen what other governments have done in a very harmful way to individuals and to societies and to their culture, I would like to see American history as the pinnacle of studies in America. And to something that I learned of, there's some individuals much younger than myself, when presenting this bill, is from social studies is derived...and I don't know if you're familiar with this, I'm not supposed to ask you a questions, but there's social justice which is a new leaning to socialism, that is being more of a trend in the educational circles. I'm not familiar with that, but as being a student of public education, of raising children in public education, as a grandparent, I want to make sure that the next generations that we produce in our country through our public school system have completely understood what this test, this simple 100-question test, which you only need 70 percent right, you have from the 9th grade until you graduate to take it, that it is an important thing. If we ask others who come to our country to do this, we should be able to. You get on to nightly entertainment and the Jay Leno, the skit, you walk down the road, who is your Vice President; adults don't know who the Secretary of State is; who...you know, what the cabinet does. So I think there's some really good questions that will only benefit our public education system. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I would take off on your social justice comment, but we don't have time right now to react to that. Yes, ma'am. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Senator Brasch, do you have any idea what the average number of years, say from 4th through 12th grade, that a student in Nebraska public schools spend on something that would be classified as either American history or civics education? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Whatever the average number is, it must not be good enough when 80 percent of high schools fail that simple 100-question test. That's my...I was just amazed. And that's why we introduced this bill. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Sure. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: The test is not burdensome, it's not cumbersome. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Well, I mean I suppose it probably depends on when you're teaching things and when you're giving the test, too. I mean, if you'd asked me at the end of my 8th grade year...or 7th grade year, I don't remember which year it was, when we did American history and we had to memorize, back in my day, we had to memorize the "Star-Spangled Banner," word for

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word, and write it out on the test and all this sort of stuff, but if you'd ask me to write it out two years later, I might not have been able to, or the Preamble...(inaudible) over the Preamble, but we had to do all those things. So I mean, I think that a lot of those things, when you're talking about recall, it's based on the test and the teaching to the test, you know, in 7th grade Mr. Stewart (phonetic) said, okay, you've got to be able to pass the Preamble to the Constitution and this and this, and we practiced that a lot in class. So he was teaching to the test, which is sort of what you're asking for here, right? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: You're...the answers, even if it's teaching to the test, are some very key answers: who is the President? Vice President? Speaker of the House? How many...and things, yes, I had forgotten until last year, when Senator Chambers asked me a pop quiz on the floor, when I stood up in support of Senator Krist's test then. There are 435--which I'll always remember--representatives, you know, of the House of Representatives. Everything else I knew, but I drew a blank on that one. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: But you know, it's funny because I think that sometimes we all suffer from "full-brain" syndrome, that's what we referred to it in grad school when they have it that, you know, once you stuff about so much, you just never can tell what's going to fall out at a random time. So just because you can't pass a test at any particular point in time doesn't necessarily mean you don't understand the concepts. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: But you have between 9th grade and graduation to learn what's there. And only 70 percent is required. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: So if everybody...so if you did it...so if you had a...if you had the class in 9th grade, you could take the test in 9th grade, you could retake the test in 9th grade, you could take it again...I mean, that would a matter of [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Until you... [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: I mean, that would be a matter of...that would be a matter of teaching to the test. So that...because every school in the state is going to want to make sure that they don't have students failing this test. So if that's the test that's going to determine whether or not kids are graduating, they're going to make sure that they're teaching to the test. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: And I believe...and this is probably for another time even, but are we not looking at like on-line education? Has on-line test too? Is that not teaching to the test? I had to

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take classes for a company I worked with, and you had to pass the test, which was, you know, on different sections, and you did it on-line. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Sure. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: So is that teaching the test when you have to answer certain questions? I don't know, I guess the whole concept of teaching to the test...I think you learn information in anticipation of meeting certain criteria. This one is the naturalization and citizenship test, a hundred basic questions of which you only need to know 70 percent. I hope I answered your... [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: But, yeah, could you have a copy of that test and hand it around on the floor? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: (Exhibit 4) I will. I will. It's so easy on-line. Right now I have it uploaded into I-Books, and it's a fun test because I'm at the point where I'm giving it not to just my husband but anyone that will listen. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. (Inaudible). [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other questions, please? Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: (Exhibit 6) We now move to supporters, proponents of LB155. I'll start with John Gale, the Nebraska Secretary of State, has sent a letter of support and we'll go down through others as we move on. Please. [LB155]

TOM NEBELSICK: Good afternoon, again. My name is Tom Nebelsick, T-o-m N-e-b-e-l-s-i-c-k, I'm representing myself as a private citizen. And I'm a small businessman in this community for nearly 40 years. Our business requires employees, we primarily hired entry-level employees, and occasionally highly-qualified, over-qualified college attenders as well. I want to support Senator Brasch in her efforts with this bill because it would involve a secondary accomplishment which would mean that you would have to read well enough to be able to pass a civics test which many times I have not been able to accomplish the training procedures in our company because of the lack of ability to read simple English. And if they could read English, they could probably pass the civics exam. And that would be the summation of my testimony. Questions? [LB155]

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SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any questions, anyone? Thank you, sir. Thank you very much. Good afternoon, again, sir. [LB155]

DAVID LOSTROH: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Go ahead. [LB155]

DAVID LOSTROH: (Exhibit 2) Senator Kolowski, members of the Education Committee, my name is Dave Lostroh, I serve as board member and legislative liaison for the Nebraska Christian Home Educators Association. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Spell your name, please, sir. [LB155]

DAVID LOSTROH: I'm sorry, last name is L-o-s-t-r-o-h, first name is David, D-a-v-i-d. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB155]

DAVID LOSTROH: Okay, since we've been talking about Americanism, I'll mention that I served in the United States Air Force as an instructor and VAL pilot from 1972 to 1977. I'm for Americanism and American exceptionalism and so, for me, it's hard to testify on this topic the way I'm going to, but I intend to explain all of this. We're confident that...we have some issues with the original of LB155; we're confident that Senator Brasch was not aware of our issues when introducing the original bill in to the Legislature and we appreciate it very much, Senator Brasch's effort to respond to our concerns with her amendment now that's before us. So immediately below is an assembly of our objections to the original LB155 which are our reasons for our support of Senator Brasch's AM676. And so if this bill gets out on the floor of the Legislature, it would be very important to the NCHEA that the original bill not go to the floor of the Legislature and AM676 would be applied to the bill as a committee amendment before it goes out onto the floor. As originally written, LB155 ignores the history behind the current homeschool law. And again, Senator Brasch, this is not anything against you, but I think there's...it's kind of complicated and messy and not that many people know it. So that's why I'm bringing it up. LB155 is an unnecessary encroachment on religious and parental rights. It's an encroachment on the current exemption law for home education because it applies a general school law to home education, in violation of the current homeschool law. It provides a specific test and assumed curriculum rather than general subject, as is now the law, and it adds a graduation requirement. However, currently homeschool parents file a report of completion of program instruction, which is form D on Rule 13, and we don't have an officially recognized

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graduation for our homeschool graduates. I suggest...we suggest, I should say, that LB155 is not needed because studies show that more regulation does not improve the already high performance level of homeschools. Studies proving this point are contained within your red NCHEA homeschool folder that each senator in the Legislature received as part of the NCHEA Legislative Day on February 22. So each of you should have a red folder that has study summaries that would help document this. LB155 is not needed because homeschool parents and graduates have a long, strong history of being civically engaged. And studies show that homeschool graduates are much more civically involved than the general U.S. population. And studies proving this point are also contained within that red NCHEA homeschool folder from Legislative Day. LB155 is nebulous regarding enforcement. It could end up in a section with prescribed penalties, which would be a problem for us. And probably our biggest objection to it is not for the test itself, we think the test is good. We do not believe that homeschooling is a reason why LB155 or LB14 came into existence. So we are concerned that LB155 is likely to be the first of many steps backward to pre-1984, when things were awful for certain church schools and homeschools. And once the trend to more regulation is started, it will prove hard to stop. So right now, our regulation is we're exempted from the general school laws, according to 79-201, excuse me, 79-1601, and so we'd like to continue with that. Homeschooling is a special situation and it performs well. So for supporting details, please refer to my full, written testimony which starts near the bottom of the page which gives a lot more documentation. Again, we're confident that Senator Brasch was not aware of all these issues when she initially submitted it. And we appreciate the amendment. We urge that the Education Committee adopt Senator Brasch's AM676 to remove said home education from LB155. If not, then the NCHEA will vigorously oppose LB155 out on the floor of the Legislature. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you for that clarification. I asked for proponents and you explained it very well how your...the amendment is (inaudible). [LB155]

DAVID LOSTROH: We're for the amendment, yes; and opposed to the original bill as it is. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, sir. Thank you very much. Other questions for this gentleman? Seeing none, thank you very much. Additional proponents, please. Again, those for the bill. Correct? Yes, ma'am. Welcome again. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: (Exhibit 3) Hello. My name is Nancy Carr, C-a-r-r. I am in favor of LB155 and I'm asking you to support this bill. It would seem logical that our graduating high school students in America would be able to pass the fundamental knowledge exam related to our form of government and how it works, and that it is given to those seeking to become naturalized citizens. If, in fact, the Americanism statute of Chapter 10 were being implemented, there should

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be no problem in passing such an exam. However, we know that our students are not being taught American history or American government and have not been taught these basics for many generations. I am, by the way, a teacher, too, by beginning, and have always been very interested in education and follow very closely, especially what's happened in history, because I'm also a patriot. What is being taught today is socialism, multiculturalism, and global citizenship. Therefore, I am in favor of a bill that requires students to be able to pass this minimal requirement of knowledge before they are able to graduate. And the senator mentioned the fact that students need to know their rights. But American students also need to know their responsibilities. And I think that's lacking today because they don't know what it is to be an American. I fear that the majority of students, at this point, would not be able to pass even that very elementary exam, and that is a very sad statement about our educational system in these days. This bill allows the students to begin to prepare and take the exam in 9th grade with multiple opportunities to take it until able to pass it, for the next four years. I'm asking you to support passage of this bill so it can be debated by the whole Legislature. And again, I hope that, as has been so prevalent in our schools for many years now, that teaching to the test, like "No Child Left Behind" mandated, I hope that that wouldn't be the case. I think the thing that's interesting about it is it would be information for us to see how little students do know. And if I were a teacher and wanted to teach Americanism, I'd highlight those things that they don't seem to understand. So that would be kind of a focus of education. And that is all. If you have any questions... [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Any questions, ma'am. Yes, Senator, please. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Hi, how are you? [LB155]

NANCY CARR: Just fine. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: So what grade did you teach? [LB155]

NANCY CARR: I taught 5th and 6th grade; but then I taught at a community college for years. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. When did you teach? [LB155]

NANCY CARR: I taught back in the '70s. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: All right, good years, huh. [LB155]

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NANCY CARR: Uh-huh, right. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: What was my question? Do you think that 9th...I'm just asking, I taught 4th and 5th grades. Do you feel that 9th grade may be a little late in starting this education? [LB155]

NANCY CARR: Oh, definitely. I wouldn't think this would...this might be the time...I was assuming this would be the time you might start preparing them for the test, but hopefully they've had a good Americanism education long before that. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. (Inaudible). Okay, all right. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: I just thought the...there was good, at least it isn't something they have to pass right then. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Um-hum. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: They do have some years to do it. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: And again, I think if they haven't had and don't begin to have, then, some real understanding of what these questions are about, then the test is not going to be helpful. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Right. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: I think it just needs to be done to show that we are very lacking in all the basic knowledge that students need. And then, as I say, if I were a teacher in the educational system, I'd look at those things they don't know, say my goodness, we have to start here, let's understand; check and balance is hardly ever heard anymore. I don't think even the general public... [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: So you think, too, it would be a good test to use as a baseline? [LB155]

NANCY CARR: Yes. It's what we give people wanting to become citizens, so, you know, I think it would be a good one to see. [LB155]

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SENATOR WALZ: Okay. Thank you. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: And I doubt that they could take it long before this either, you know what 4th and 5th graders would be. [LB155]

SENATOR WALZ: Oh, yeah, right. [LB155]

NANCY CARR: But if they were interested maybe they could even pass it. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other questions, please, from the senators? Thank you, Ms. Carr, appreciate it very much. Additional proponents, please. Any additional proponents, yes, please? Welcome again. [LB155]

KATHRYN DILLOW: (Exhibit 5) Thank you. Kathryn Dillow, K-a-t-h-r-y-n D-i-l-l-o-w. Again, thank you for the opportunity to be heard. As I mentioned earlier, I am the president of Nebraska Homeschool, which is an Omaha-based homeschool group. And I come today to speak about the uniqueness of LB155 in relation to homeschool families. Exempt schools stand in a unique position in regards to this particular bill. In its original form, LB155 was not acceptable to us. However, with the amendment to exclude the exempt schools we no longer oppose LB155. Again, I emphasize, it must include the amendment removing exempt schools from the bill. Earlier this week, we did send messages out to all of the senators here in the committee, addressing what our concerns were and why we were opposing this bill initially. And I wanted to quickly summarize some of those. The inclusion of exempt schools presents several issues of concern, ones that threaten the very freedom of parents and legal guardians in directing the education of their children; it creates a dangerous precedent for allowing state regulation of exempt schools. There are five key issues related to including exempt schools. It negates the legal election of the parents and the legal guardians to be exempt from the state regulations. It controls the program of instruction by inserting a requirement for graduation, and that would be required before we could acknowledge completion of our programs. Creates state control of curriculum source and content by specifically saying that within our social studies core content, materials would be included that reflected the content of the naturalization test. It creates state control of student assessment and evaluation by, again, requiring that they take this test. And then, state control of student performance and achievement standards by specifying the specific level of achievement. Now, we did present these issues to Senator Brasch prior to this hearing and she graciously considered them. And today, she offered the amendment which we greatly appreciate and we do support. We encourage the committee to adopt her amendment and preserve all freedom of election to be exempt so that we can continue to educate our children with this freedom. To be clear, we support this as long as it retains the amendment that she has proposed. In regards to the bill itself, I would like to speak to a few issues. I've heard the

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comments that it may be teaching to the test. By trade I'm a retired nurse. When we want to know how something is going, we assess it. We take the temperature of our patient, our child, and then we act, based on that information. I somewhat see this test as a way of taking the temperature of the civic knowledge of our students. From there, yes, we should teach to the test. If they don't pass this information, they need to have the dialogue, the discussion, the debate. Why do I care? What does it matter? This is where you open the discussion and you say--here is why it's important; now let me teach you about this. And then over time if we do this in 9th grade and repeat this, we begin to provide them with information, repetitive information, information that hopefully they will begin to internalize and understand the significance of as we continue to reinforce this throughout other methods in their schooling. I do think that we need to consider teaching civics and knowledge of our nation much earlier than 9th grade; 5th grade is probably a good solid place to really start bringing it in. But I don't think we need to stop ever. I think that there should be a comprehensive, beginning-to-end review in 5th grade, again in middle school, again in high school. And every time you readdress those same topics, you go deeper, you dive deeper, you bring in more of the relevant content, more of the original documents. You get them engaged. And as they repeat this over and over and over again, when they take that test for graduation, they ace it. They not only ace it, they know why it's important. And then they can then become proponents of being a solid and active citizen once they've graduated. This is why I support this bill. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any questions, please? Thank you very much. Additional proponents, please. Welcome again. [LB155]

MAXWELL SMITH: Thank you for having me up. For the record I'm Maxwell Smith. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Spell your name, please. [LB155]

MAXWELL SMITH: Oh, yes, M-a-x-w-e-l-l S-m-i-t-h. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB155]

MAXWELL SMITH: There's a man that many of you may know that we might be able to take a lesson from, relating to this bill. See, this person took control of a nation because he made people forget their past. Yeah, when it came to civic knowledge of their country, he explained that as unnecessary; he burned books and he made it so people didn't know what they came from, didn't know why it was so important. Now, many of you may be able to guess this person; it was Adolph Hitler. This is how he took control of Nazi Germany because they did not know their past; they did not know what was important, what to oppose and what to believe in. They no longer had hope for their future because all they had left was to simply move forward and follow

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as "sheeple" along with Adolph Hitler. Now, the reason I support this bill is because, honestly, I believe anything that institutes knowledge for our youth is very important, no matter what. So we never ever can repeat an event like this. That's all. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, thank you very much. Thanks for coming today. Any other questions from senators, please? Thank you, appreciate it. Additional proponents please; any others? Good afternoon. [LB155]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Roger Kingsley, that's K-i-n-g-s-l-e-y; currently live in West Point, Nebraska, native Nebraskan. I did not intend to testify for LB155, but a couple of things came up that I thought maybe, at least in my mind, maybe needed some clarification. I believe it was you, Senator Morfeld, talked about the...memorizing rote facts or, yeah, as opposed to, maybe, a greater body of knowledge. And indeed, it's always good to know the background information to anything. But, ultimately, I have to think about that because if something is a fact, then it has to be true. Correct? I mean, nothing that is a lie can be a fact. So when we learn facts, we learn truth. I think that's really a critical thing to remember because in this day and age, when we've got Facebook and Instagram and Tweets and Twitters, there's all kinds of information out there, information of any kind, probably not a lot of it based in fact. Entertaining--some of it may be bawdy and funny--but indeed not...certainly not something that we would call facts. So I think it's important that we remember that, even though perhaps it might be just a small box of knowledge that these kids are getting, it's still a box of knowledge. I know you, Senator Ebke, talked about at 8th grade what you had to learn. But it...and at certain seasons in your life, it didn't mean that much. But, ultimately, I guess I would like to think it does mean a lot though, doesn't it, as we get older and we understand truly what other people fought and died for so that we do have the freedoms. It's critical, really, that that knowledge gets passed on. And the other point of fact...I do apologize for the quiver in my voice, this is the very first time I've ever testified, again, with an august body like this. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: You're doing great. [LB155]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Just bear with me. Thank you. But the other thing that's important to remember is...oh, I lost my train of thought, I apologize. Like I said, we got the body of knowledge. But that it...I've just heard so much testimony here today, much of it very, very good. It's always interesting. I've sat in on these committees, it's always interesting to see the process and it's an important process. We dare not lose sight of that. And I guess that's what I think is important about...it's not the test that's the issue here at all. It's, once again like I said, that basic box of knowledge that is going to...could be worked on. I mean, I was 50 years old before I understood that this was a constitutional republic, this nation that I lived in was not a democracy, had never been...not based in a democracy. Now what it is today we could argue at a great length

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as to what we've become, but it was founded as a constitutional republic, which means the laws apply to everyone. And so it's important...the law is important in this case, that was my second point, glad you allowed me to get to that. So it is important that nobody is above the law. And certainly, we've seen many, I feel, many egregious...well, it turns away from that, unfortunately, but we find people that have been able to act above the law and that's very discouraging to me. But it is important that people understand that, that our kids learn just the basic facts of who we are and how we got here. I mean, any of us could go on at length here, many military men have sat here and certainly they've given up a...they serve their country, we need to respect that and understand...my grandpa was a World War I veteran; my dad was a World War II vet. It's important that we understand the value of...they didn't go to war because they wanted to, they went there because they understood that what we had is worth fighting for. Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. Any questions, please? Thank you, sir, appreciate it very much. Any additional proponents, please? Good afternoon. [LB155]

KATHY WILMOT: Kathy Wilmot, W-i-l-m-o-t, and I wasn't prepared to speak. I had a meeting and thank goodness it got over. I spent eight years on the State Board of Education here in Nebraska. I also taught in Nebraska public schools. And most recently, I don't know if you would call it a privilege, but I have attended some meetings where I've seen middle-aged people that don't really understand that we are a constitutional republic and they don't even seem to be able to tell the difference between socialism and what we're supposed to have here. And I've even had individuals up in their mid-20s and late 20s that have asked me--just what is socialism? And I'm thinking to myself--how in the world did you come out of Nebraska schools and not know these things? And it is important to know where we came from. Someone asked about teaching to the test. That's what's going on now every day in our schools. And I'll tell you why I know. My eight years on the State Board of Education, when we were wrangling over standards for our schools, the then Dr. Doug Christensen who was Commissioner of Education, over and over I've heard him say, the assessment drives the curriculum. And that's exactly it. When those tests are written, teachers are going to teach to those tests. You can call it that, or you can say assessment drives the curriculum. But that is what it is. I mean, you know, there is no problem with teaching to a civics test then, that's what we do every day. In fact, I have some grandchildren right now that are starting into the Smarter Balance Tests in their schools in South Dakota. And every day those teachers, believe you me, are making sure they teach to that test because their school gets rated on that; their money is going to get rated on that; the teachers are going to be evaluated according to that. In fact, these kids, some of them are only in the 3rd grade, are going to sit for an hour and a half at a time and they told me they even have to raise their hand and ask if they need to blow their nose because some...they call it the test police, I have no idea who it is, actually comes to their desk and they decide whether they can blow their nose right then or not. They can't even leave the room to go to the bathroom because they're so afraid there might some...these are what you call high stakes assessment. So I have no fear of

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kids learning civics and finding out who America is and what our forefathers fought and why our constitution is important. I do support, though, the amendment; I think that's critical. As you look over the history of education in our state, that was a hard-fought battle for individuals with religious...strongly held religious beliefs to be able to teach their children in this state. I don't know if you remember it or not, but I remember it. There was a church that actually had its doors chained shut by the police to stop that freedom for people in this state. And I don't think that that's what we're about. You know, you can talk to many teachers and you can ask them--why are you using Common Core math in our state, in our schools? Because I'll tell you, a lot of teachers hate that Common Core math; their kids don't understand it, they're confused. You have some that like it; some kids it does well for. The reason they're doing that is because it aligns with our standards. So again, the assessments drive that curriculum, the assessments drive what those kids are going to be presented with. And earlier, there was mention of We the People curriculum. I definitely ask each one of you to look at that curriculum yourself. Do you know it leaves out some of our amendments to our constitution? It's important that we teach kids what this country was founded on. And I think it's extremely critical now. I didn't catch all of Senator Groene's question a while ago, but we think of the refugee children coming into our state. I would hate to have them robbed of knowing why our country is so different from the country they came from. Why? This is why. This is what we want to test for. We want to make sure that the people who sit in your chairs years from now know that as well. Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: (Exhibits 7, 8) Thank you. Any questions, Senators? Thank you very much. Any additional proponents, please. Again, proponents. Then, any in opposition, opponents, please. And while they're coming up, we also have two letters from...one from Nebraska State Education Association, and another from Nebraska Homeschool. Thank you. John? [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Chairman Kolowski, members of the committee, John, J-o-h-n, Bonaiuto, B-o-n-a-i-u-t-o, of the Nebraska Association of School Boards. I want to be on record as opposing LB155. School boards prefer the direction that Senator Krist is taking in LB14 as amended. And the reason is that it does not put this test in statute because...we really strongly encourage curriculum to be dealt with at the state board level. They're elected officials and they work with elected school board members. And there's nothing wrong with this test, but it really should be handled through the state board and through social studies standards. Having said that, I have to apologize in advance, I'm going to read to you. And I'm going to read to you the preamble to the Nebraska state Social Studies Standards: The purpose of the Nebraska Social Studies Standards it to teach our children to become young patriots who have an intellectual understanding of the genesis (sic: genius) of our country's founding principles who feel an emotional connection to our nation. Achieving this purpose requires teaching Nebraska students to become responsible citizens who are prepared to preserve, protect, and defend freedom and democracy in our nation and world. Wow, I don't think that's all bad. The other thing I would

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mention is the Nebraska Social Studies Standards has three strands: one is history, the other is geography, and then civics. Not trying to take anything away from one area or the other. But I really believe that there's a method here. And I also don't believe that students are not having an opportunity to learn about what's important in our nation's history and civics and patriotism. And so with that, I will conclude my testimony. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you very much, appreciate that. Any questions? Yes, Senator Ebke. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Dr. Bonaiuto, I was trying to noodle some things out here, based on my own memory. Do you have any sense for how many...and I don't know if anybody from NDE is coming up or not. Do you have any sense for about how many years, out of say 4th through 12th grade, kids get social studies...get American history and/or civics instruction? [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: You know, I heard you ask that question. And I always try to get the answer to that. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: (Inaudible). [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And because I'm interested in knowing that. We have...you know, at the high school level, there are definitely graduation requirements. I'm not sure how that plays out in middle school and elementary level, but we do have specific course requirements in the secondary area. But that's one of those things that students now get more information on this thing, it's at their fingertips. But that was something I couldn't figure out. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: I have some recollection...well, I have a recollection of kids, when they were in 2nd, 3rd grade, doing...depending on when the presidential election year was, doing the old, you know, the election social studies...the Weekly Reader election things. I have recollection of kids in 4th grade, that's Nebraska history, typically. [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Yes. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: But they also have a fairly significant civics component, sort of Nebraska civics. 6th grade, I believe, is when they did the Colonial studies in Crete; now that doesn't mean everybody else does it then. 8th grade, I've got a son who is 8th grade and they've got a fairly significant component of civics and American history and it's to the point where he's been writing papers about Andrew Jackson and the...and has come home and pulled the Federalist Papers off my bookshelves. And then I think 9th grade, I believe, is American history or civics,

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and then they have an opportunity later in high school, amongst...I think it's three and a half years of social studies in high school, as I remember it. And so they have a year of American history or civics, I don't now what it exactly is called as a freshman. But then they have the opportunity to take AP American government as juniors or seniors, as well. So I mean, you've got a fair number, probably half of our social studies curriculum in the 4th through 12th grade is made up of American history or civics instruction. Does that sound... [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: It sounds very accurate, Senator. And I was saying it's a fairly comprehensive model. And I think you would find that it's fairly similar from school district to school district. [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, go ahead. [LB155]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Kolowski. Thank you very much for being here. So I'm going to follow, just a little bit on her, because I've been trying to remember from my childhood and kids. So, also in high school they take world history? [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: They take... [LB155]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Isn't there three years of history? [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Yes. I was thinking I took world history as a freshman. But, you know, that was a hundred years ago. (Laughter) [LB155]

SENATOR LINEHAN: That's when I took it, too, and it wasn't quite a hundred years ago, but close. So world history and civics and American history, but I do... [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And government, yeah. [LB155]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Government. Are we "short shrifting" geography? [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: You know, and I think more of that is middle school and 7th and 8th grade. [LB155]

SENATOR LINEHAN: Okay. Okay, thank you very much, appreciate it. [LB155]

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JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: All this varies, depending on the district and their curriculum sequencing. And just to bring everyone up to another understanding, text books and connectivity items that you might buy that would go with a laptop, if you have a laptop for students, all those are variations on the theme anymore in middle school or high school, primarily high school. I think we need to consider that because I can look back, John, to 1967 when I started teaching. And there...I might have had 15, 16 different text book companies I could turn to, to find materials, a wealth of materials. Today if there's three text book companies, you're lucky. So things hone down and the technology and all the other things that are out there, and then driving a lot of our curriculum, so when a district is doing a study on what they're going to adopt next, there are limitations because of cost and because of the competition out there. [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Very much so. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB155]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other opposition, please? Opponents to LB155? And neutrals, please? Welcome. [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: Thank you. Hello, my name is Abigail Whalen, W-h-a-l-e-n, and I am speaking neutrally because of the language that is in LB155, saying "in whole or in part" in taking the citizenship exam. I am a teacher currently, a social studies teacher. I taught civics in the past and I currently teach AP United State government politics. And the choices of questions that are in the citizenship test are definitely, overwhelmingly embedded into the curriculum of the district in which I work. This would not be a problem. We teach not only this, but we teach well beyond everything that is in this. We will go...the simple like We the People of the United States, who is your state representative?, we break down the social media usage of the different representatives of...Ben Sasse's Twitter account is much more popular than Deb Fischer's, that's something we've assessed, and well can you talk to your constituents. Chuck Grassley is a noted favorite, also, of my students. We go beyond all of this every single day. So that's something that I would say, if this is part of this, if it's in whole or in part, I can find it in every assessment I give. I can definitely find it. Will it take tracking to find a pass rate of 70 percent? Yes, but I can still do this. I wanted to note quickly about that survey that's been quoted throughout the day, about 80 percent or 83 percent failure rate of that citizenship test, speaking as kindly as possible to the people doing that test, I really admire their fact for going out there, it's a sample size of 200 students, according to the story that was published in 2015. That is not a great sample size. I

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have actually given the entire citizenship test as a final when I taught civics, and as a pre-test to AP gov. and I think I've had two kids ever fail it and I've gone far beyond 200. So I would say...I don't know where they were sampling. I don't what that was, but it is definitely embedded in our curriculum, the information to pass this. Others, you've talked a lot about what is required and what is not. I can't speak for other districts, and I'm officially speaking for myself, not my district. But we require passing of two semesters of American history and one semester of government. We administer our civics course to our freshmen, and then they can also take AP gov., which I teach. If students move into the district when they are a junior or a senior, they can opt to either take that civics course with freshmen or they can take AP gov. with me. So I do have a lot of students that are coming in. I have one from North Dakota, one from California, one from Texas; I have a...students that move around very frequently. And for me when I'm doing this and why I'm more towards the opposition, setting aside an entire class period to do this in a whole, it takes a whole class period to do all 100 questions. When I'm trying to prepare my kids for a curriculum that my school board decided on, I didn't, they accepted and adhered to the College Board's Curriculum for Gov., I have one semester to prepare them for this. And that is a blitz through all that is America. We cover regressive taxes, progressive taxes, the social security cap; we moved on to the military and industrial complex right after that. We cover a lot, that was one day. We have a lot to do. One more day is burdensome to the way the curriculum has been established and voted on. And by all means, I love it, these are good sets, these are good questions, but we can do a lot more and we do a lot more every day, as social studies teachers in Nebraska public schools. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Ms. Whalen, where do you teach may I ask? [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: Elkhorn High School. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Elkhorn, good. [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: Yes. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Which one are you in? [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: The Elkhorn High School. (Laughter) [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Just checking. Thank you very much. Yes, Senator. [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming today, Ms. Whalen. I think that if the teachers at my kids' school came, they would have testified the same way. So I'm glad to hear, at

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least, that discussion. My concern about setting forth a specific test was the same concern I had previously such as: They've got one question on women and their contributions to American society. They've got two questions on civil rights and African Americans. Of the question of the--name the one Indian tribe in the United States; not one of them is the four remaining tribes in Nebraska. That's crazy. I mean, if you want to get upset, there's something to get upset about, too. I mean, so, you know, it's easy to say--oh, this is the perfect test. It's not; it's not Nebraska centric, it's not...there's no question on Standing Bear, who is our civil rights leader in Nebraska, nothing about that. So, I mean, we can all argue in and out all day about what should be on a test, which is, I think, you know, the whole issue. And I do think that the schools across the state need to be teaching social studies, but I don't know, I still...I need to hear more about that sample. And I agree what that person said. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other questions? [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming today. [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: No problem. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you very much. [LB155]

ABIGAIL WHALEN: Thank you so much. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Go Antlers. Any other neutral testimony today, please? Welcome, sir. [LB155]

JIM VLACH: I don't know if I should say good afternoon or good evening. Afternoon? [LB155]

SENATOR EBKE: A few more minutes. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yes, sir, please. [LB155]

JIM VLACH: My name is Jim, J-i-m Vlach, V-l-a-c-h; five little letters which almost everybody mix up. I am currently a school board member from Lyons-Decatur Northeast in Lyons, Nebraska. I am also on the board of directors for the school board association...Nebraska Association of School Boards. And prior to that, I had been a classroom teacher for 32 years. In reference to the study that had been mentioned, I asked the young lady, as she left the room, what the parameters of that study happened to be. And it was five local schools in her

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geographical area. And then I asked her if there was any racial or geographic or cultural diversity in that at all? And she said no. So what we had, which she readily admits, and I pointed out that I didn't remember her hearing her say that...I didn't want to discourage her, but she didn't list the parameters of the study before she cited it. And I will give her credit. I think it's a wonderful thing to do; it's a sample of the good things that are happening. And so I guess I would take some...I would be remiss to say that I would have to accept the findings of that as totally indicative of the state of Nebraska. From this point I would like to simply comment on what's happening in my district. We require eight semesters of "history." And so our seniors are required to take four years of history which include all the things that we had mentioned before. Our social studies teacher, of which I am proud to say we have 1.2 FTE, I asked him about this after we had our parental involvement meeting and our March board meeting about the alignment to the standards. And he had done his research and he felt that they were very much aligned, but he also pointed out that they intend to go well beyond, and they do. In terms of what a person remembers, if somebody came up to me now and asked me the difference between sign and cosign, I would have to throw myself into traffic, (laughter) because I can't...I don't remember, I'm sorry, I don't remember. Is our history important? Oh, certainly, certainly. Is it the most important thing? I think it has to be as important as anything else. And so is that in any way...certainly not being critical, I don't want to criticise those people who feel that it has been forgotten. Of all the standards in the state of Nebraska, I think they were the second to the last to be developed. English, language arts, writing went on and on and on and I was an English teacher. And so yes, we refined and refined and refined and refined every year. I don't know, necessarily, if we have given the entire standards an opportunity to prove their workability. And so I do know that in our district, the seniors in American government class this past year raised \$5,000 to donate to a veterans memorial. And when the veterans memorial fund was not quite at its goal, they sacrificed part of their prom expenses. They had chartered a bus to take them to some after-hours fun that they have. They gave up the charter and took the money that they had reserved for their charter and, again, donated it to the veterans. They have wonderful Memorial Day...excuse me, Veterans Day programs in which they're honored; some wonderful speeches that they create. They have civic projects, each of the seniors, either alone or with a partner, can deal with a civics project in either of the two communities because we have two: Lyons and Decatur. They've done wonderful things. They've built docks for people to fish off of. They've repaired businesses on Main Street. And all of this so that they have an awareness of what their...they joyfully do as citizens of the United States. In terms of whether or not...oh, I'm sorry, I'm finished. [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Do you want to finish your last statement? [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Finish your last statement, yes, go ahead, your last sentence. [LB155]

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JIM VLACH: I was going to say, in terms of whether or not the decline in millennial or X-Gen voters indicates a lack of knowledge, I think it very well may just as well indicate a lack of interest. There were adults who I consider extremely well versed and educated looked at the last presidential election as the lesser of two evils. And I know a number of them who had never ever missed voting. I know they voted, but they weren't happy with either of the candidates. And so part of the thing, which I hate to admit and it breaks my heart, but part of it is the choice not to vote. I'm not saying that's what they should take, but I think in lots of them they didn't vote, not out of ignorance, but disillusionment. I'm not saying it's right, but I'm saying we need to take that into consideration as well if we look at low voting turnout as part of this problem. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Questions? Mr. Vlach, is that right? [LB155]

JIM VLACH: Vlach, right. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Yep, thank you, appreciate it very much. [LB155]

JIM VLACH: Okay. You bet. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any other neutral? Any other neutral statements, please? That...we'll now turn to Senator Brasch, would you like to close, please? [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, members of the committee and who are remaining in the committee. I did want to respond to the comment about the last election, because I just happen to have in my hands facts from the election in 2014. And it said only 1 in 5 Americans age 18 through 29 cast a ballot in those elections, marking 2014 as having the lowest youth turnout in over 40 years. And "perhaps young adults", and this is from this article here called Americans Know Little About Civic Affairs, about the citizenship test, and it says here that "perhaps young adults' ignorance of civic affairs helps explain why so few of them cast their votes. Perhaps that means that change is possible." So I did want to quote that that the election in 2014 was the lowest in U.S. history. And then I also did want to respond, I guess, to a question, just to have it on record, about the term "social studies". And this is from a paper published in 1977 from socialstudies.org, and it talks about the emergence of the social studies. And according to Barr, Barth, and Shermis in 1977, "the social studies was nurtured by the works of John Dewey." And John Dewey was a leading progressive scholar in the 1880s and onward. Dewey taught mainly at Columbia University, devoted much of his life to redefining the idea of education. His thought was influenced by a German philosopher, Hegel, and central to it was the denial of objective truth and an embrace of historicism and moral relativism. As much as he was critical of the American founding and rejection, he rejected individuals' natural rights and objective truth; and it leads to the acceptance of any truth, whether it is socialism, communism, or Nazism, or some

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other dangerous truth. So there was a documented tie made to that here, and that was to answer the other question. And then we also had pulled from the other...I think I had one more paper that you handed me about the statistics about millennials. And that was from the Pew Research Institute, talking about, when I mentioned that every generation is pulling further away from our rights that were given to us in our constitution and our experience, the Pew Research Institute found that younger generations, they support certain government censorship of free speech, where many of my generation and older is that we cling to free speech as an unalienable right. And now the millennials are recognizing, or 40 percent of them believe, that it's okay to censor some speech. Gen X believes that, 27 percent of them, free speech censorship. The Boomers, 24 percent. And the silent majority, which I'm not there yet, ages 70 to 81, believe that 12 percent. So we do need to take a look, you know, and I understand from the history teachers, scholars, that we are reaching out into history. But this is not about our history teachers and the academics, it is about the ability of high school students, and it sounds that it should be just a walk in the park for them to pass this test that our immigrants are required to take to become U.S. citizens. It seems like it's only the right thing to do. Can our high school students pass this, whether it's a random sample that some high school students took upon themselves. You know, why are 15, 16 other states seeing the need to do this? And I believe Kathy Wilmot said it earlier, is that those people who immigrate to this county, be it my parents in 1950 or someone in 2017, they know why they left, they know why they are coming here, they know about our freedom firsthand. They know about the ability for them and their children to enjoy the rights of safety, and we have so much to offer here. And this is such a little test that, in comparison to the realm of what we have founded as a country. So I do ask for you to look at this civics test and to pass it favorably. And my next bill will go into Americanism. Any questions from the committee? [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any last questions, please? Yes, ma'am. [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for getting us a copy of the test. It is interesting, and I'm glad to see it again. So I've seen it before. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: Isn't it interesting? And I did notice that our Native American Indian tribes, but I did recognize a lot of the others too. And so I guess I'm just very fortunate to know the ones in Nebraska. [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Yeah, we are. Just for the record, it's the Winnebago, the Ponca, the Omaha, and the Santee Sioux. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: The Sioux, yes. [LB155]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: They do mention Sioux, but it's Santee Sioux. [LB155]

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SENATOR BRASCH: They did have Sioux in there. [LB155]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: And that's the end of LB155. We'll now move to LB308. Senator Brasch, welcome back. [LB155]

SENATOR BRASCH: (Exhibit 1) Thank you, Vice Chair Senator Kolowski. And it looks like the Chair Groene and remaining members of the Education Committee. My name is Lydia Brasch, spelled L-y-d-i-a B-r-a-s-c-h, and I represent the 16th District in the Nebraska Legislature. I am still here before you today, this time it is to introduce LB308, which addresses the committee on Americanism, and I believe it dovetails very nicely with our previous bills on the civics exam. The committee on Americanism is an important ongoing, already existing, subcommittee of local school boards in Nebraska. The purpose of the committee is to ensure that kids develop an understanding of and appreciation for American history and the American republic; to ensure that the American history and American government curriculum in Nebraska's public schools is taught in such a way that it instills into the next generation of Americans loyalty to the United States Constitution and to our country in general; a devotion to justice; and a love of liberty. The intent of LB308 is to ensure that the committee on Americanism is performing its duties in conformity with statutory requirements that allow for more transparency in the operations and decisions of the committee. And to those ends, this legislation adds three nonburdensome requirements on the current committee. The committee shall hold no less than three public meetings annually, at least one of which allows public testimony. The second is the committee keeps minutes of all meetings, showing the time and place of the meeting, which members were present or absent, and the substance and details of all matters discussed. And lastly, any curriculum that is recommended or approved by the committee on Americanism will be made readily accessible to the public and contains a reference to 79-724, so that the public are aware that such a statute exists. The amendment that I am introducing here today, AM675, makes both important and minor changes. One of the vitally important changes that it makes to LB308 is that it also adds the Declaration of Independence to the list of documents that shall be given special attention. A person cannot understand the principles of America and the ends for which the Constitution was drafted without understanding the Declaration of Independence. I believe those two documents, the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, should together receive special and significant attention in our schools. The other changes the amendment makes is it adds the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the list of birthdays to be celebrated in schools. His birthday is probably already celebrated, but I wanted to correct this oversight in the Americanism statutes. The amendment also adds Thanksgiving Day to the list of holidays to be celebrated and given special attention. I believe we should make sure that the story of the first Thanksgiving from 1621 is taught in our schools. And finally, the last change that the amendment makes is merely cosmetic, in that it adds the first names of Abraham and George in front of Lincoln and Washington respectively. My motivation for introducing this bill was that I received a call from some constituents who

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were concerned that not many local school boards and districts were complying with these statutes. I believe you've heard from earlier, and you may hear from again, a gentleman who used to be on a local school board, and his frustration. His school board did not have a committee on Americanism. He spent considerable time and money in sending out a survey to all educational units in the state asking them if their school district was complying with these statutes. And he was quite surprised to find, in fact, that many were not. I believe this news should cause grave concern among all Nebraskans who value our constitution and this republic. We only make our country stronger by teaching the next generation about the wonderful blessings of our unique situation we hold in this world. In America, we do not continually have violent revolutions where one dictator replaces another or where one violent faction replaces another. The Declaration of Independence enumerates the ideals of our country, which we are always striving to live up to, and the words of the Constitution were written and adopted by the founders. They are there to protect those ideals--liberty is a very precious, yet fragile privilege. If you look around the world today, not many people are free, not many people are allowed to write the scripts of their own life. But in America, we are free to do that. It is the solemn duty of every generation of Americans to instruct the generation after them, to teach them to love and understand our institutions, and to teach them to protect those institutions with an uncompromising fidelity. And I believe that this bill helps to do just that by ensuring the enforcement and transparency of the committee on Americanism. We are helping to ensure that we are preserving the sacrifices of those who came before us, and securing the blessings of liberty to our posterity. I did want to mention, also, is a few of the comments that I heard earlier about Americanism being an old law. Well, the Constitution is an old law from 1787 and the Federal Judiciary Act of 1789 is an old law that's still enforced today. It set up the judicial structure under Article III of the U.S. Constitution. I also wanted to mention when the connections to old fears, such as McCarthyism, were intended, it looks, by the Board of Education or whoever to be erased, that we don't mention the communists or the Nazis. I did attend two homeland security workshops held by the Council of State Governments as a member of the Council of State Governments International Relations Committee. One was in 2015 and another was also attended by Senator Pansing Brooks in 2016. Homeland Security, they stress the point that since 9/11 the United States has fortified their defenses and protocols here at home to protect against invasion on our shores, but they are very concerned about domestic terrorist attacks from individuals born and raised right here in America. They specifically said that they are concerned about inspired extremists helping individuals carry out lone-wolf attacks, using a number of different propaganda messages. Could I get some water, please? And they're using social media. I believe that this committee...this is terrible, I'm sorry. I don't believe I was designed to talk this long. I do believe that this committee on Americanism is essential to combating that type of technique used by extremists and other terrorists, that we do need to identify that we do have enemies. They may not be coming onto our shores, but maybe being inspired by terrorists. And I believe we must teach our young people loyalty to America, and its benefits and its ideals, as are articulated in our Declaration of Independence and protected in our

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Constitution. If there's any questions, I will try to answer them. Otherwise, there's others to testify. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Ebke. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Thank you. I just have a quick question about your amendment. On Line 7 it says "or on the day or week." So your intention is that for these holidays that, if they aren't in session, say it's a Monday...or say it's a Saturday or Sunday, that they would celebrate it either before or after, right? [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: Right. Correct. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: What do you do about...and I notice this is in already. It used to say "if the school is in session", now it says "on the day or week," and yet, Flag Day for sure, I don't think there's any school in Nebraska that's going to be in session the week before or after Flag Day, June 14, right? [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Summer school. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: I suppose, yeah. So you get the kids that are in summer school. Okay. But everybody else misses out. [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: Or homeschool...no, homeschool is exempted from this. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Yeah, homeschools are included, right? I mean, we just determine that. [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: But they're not a part of this bill. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: But that's a good point and we'll look at that amendment and see if we need to add something. If you have a suggestion, I would welcome it. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Okay. I just...I was just curious why you got rid of the "if the school is in session" and added the "on the day or week." So. [LB308]

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SENATOR GROENE: Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: And just adding on to that, I would have added, because I was thinking summer school, Independence Day. I'm not sure why that isn't. July 4 should definitely have been there. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Yeah, if you're going to do it. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: If you're going to think of it... [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: You know, kids are probably going to be in summer school (inaudible). [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Yeah, exactly. And I also thought it was interesting that you did get rid of any study of the Nebraska Constitution. Do you have a comment about that? [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: It's still there. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: No, it said strike... [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Strike the United States. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Oh, maybe just strike the United States. So it's going to say...oh, okay: Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, and the Constitution of Nebraska. Okay. You know, I appreciate your bringing this and I understand some of the arguments about McCarthyism and the worry that there's litmus tests of being a good American. And, you know, I think that we have a continuous pendulum swing and right now I am worried about people understanding the freedom of the press, freedom of the Judiciary, the three branches of government and the powers therein. And so I am very torn on this, because I do see an attack on our Constitution right now and it really worries me. So it's...I'm pleased to see you bringing it and I've got some food for thought. Thank you very much. [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you. Proponents. [LB308]

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CHASE ALPHIN: (Exhibit 2) Good evening everyone. And for the record, my name is Chase Alphin, C-h-a-s-e A-l-p-h-i-n. I would like to thank everyone, the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of this committee for hearing me speak today. It is a very tremendous honor to be here before you all today. Let me establish before I get started that I am here to represent the generation that is being debated over. I don't have any...obviously, I have political and religious biases, but I want to...it is my goal to present to you today what I have seen in my school, what I have seen in my education system. And I know that being a 10th grader I have two more years, two more years and a quarter, left of my school. But I would like to show you what I have been taught so far. Let me also establish that, not being a native Nebraskan, let me just commemorate you all on a phenomenal job you do on Nebraska education, because I can see a difference from where I'm from and here. But I would like to start out with a short passage of scripture, Proverbs 22:6 in the King James version says "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." Even in this politically divided time that we live in, everyone can agree that we have a responsibility to educate our children, whether you think that should be done by the state, parents, or whomever. I would like to say the powers of the federal government include the following: printing money, regulating interstate between states and international trade, making treaties and conducting foreign policy, declaring war, providing an army and a navy, establishing post offices, and making laws necessary to carry out these powers. The 10th Amendment, and I quote, this is the 10th Amendment of the United States Constitution, says, "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people." Education, therefore, is the job of the state, the people, and parents; not the job of the federal government. According to pewresearch.org, and I quote this from one of their articles, "One of the biggest cross-national tests is the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which every three years measures reading ability, math and science literacy, and other key skills among 15-year-olds in dozens of developed and developing nations. The most recent PISA results, from 2015, place the United States in an unimpressive 38th out of 71 countries in math and 24th in science. Among the 35 members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which sponsors the PISA initiative, the United States ranked 30th in math and 19th in science." According to a Gallup poll, and again, I quote this from a Gallup article, "In anticipation of Independence Day, Americans were asked if they could identify the specific historical event celebrated on July 4. 55 percent say it commemorates the signing of the Declaration of Independence", which technically that's not true, because that's when the Declaration of Independence was ratified, not signed. "Another 32 percent give a more general answer, saying that July 4th celebrates Independence Day." When Americans are asked to correctly identify the country from which America gained its independence, only 76 percent of Americans, according to this Gallup poll, can correctly identify Great Britain. A handful, 2 percent, think America's freedom was won by France; 3 percent mention some other country, including Russia, China, and Mexico, among others named; while 19 percent of Americans are unsure. Let me be clear that neither Gallup nor Pew Research are politically motivated. Both,

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moreover, are unbiased, internationally respected polling businesses. My freshman year in high school--like I said I'm a sophomore now--I, as required by state law, took a geography class. I chose to take Geography Diff, where in this class there was an individual who was confused as to the difference between Washington, D.C., and Washington State. A high-schooler in an advanced class, which is supposed to be the "smart class" confused about our nation's capital and one of the 50 states. In that same class--again, let me reiterate that this is supposed to be the advanced class--in that same class a different individual, and we decided to take this apparently very controversial citizenship test, got our nation's birth year wrong. This individual knew it was as '76, but not that it was 1776. In conclusion, I would like to quote our 40th president, Ronald Reagan, "Freedom is never more than one generation from extinction. We didn't pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day, we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children's children..." what it was like to once live in the United States "where men and women were free." Senators, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of this committee, we are staring right into the ugly eyes of President Ronald Reagan's philosophy and prophecy. Let me be clear, I am not a 90-year-old man shaking my fist, ranting and raving about how it was so good under President Roosevelt. That's not what I'm here today. I am saying that I am living right now, as a 15-year-old young man, I am living the "dumbification" of my generation. Out of the 20 or so people, and I'm almost done, that took this citizenship test, I was one of the four to five that passed this test. Now understand, I'm not trying to make myself look good or paint myself in a good picture or a good light, but I'm only trying to prove a point. The only reason why I passed this test was because I have had a passion for my country. I have done research, I have listened to veterans speak, and I have listened to family members speak. And I have done my own research on this country, I was not taught this in school, and the same is probably true for some other young folks. If we have any care for the future of our nation, I urge you to allow this bill to go to the floor, and please, please vote yes for LB308. Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? Very well, Senator Kolowski. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: I'll ask again, if I could please, thank you, sir. Chase, where do you go to high school also? [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: Lincoln Southeast. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Also, Southeast. Sophomore? [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you very much. Thanks for being here. [LB308]

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CHASE ALPHIN: Thanks. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: And when did you move here, Mr. Alphin? [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: Oh, I guess it would have been six years ago. I moved from, it was technically Highlandville School District, but that's in between Springfield and Branson in the state of Missouri. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: In Missouri. Well, we're glad you're here and you did a very good job speaking. Thank you. [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: Thank you. It's good to be here. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you and that was very eloquent. You do have a good vocabulary. [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: Thank you very much. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Keep reading, it will get bigger. [LB308]

CHASE ALPHIN: I will. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you. Next proponent. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: (Exhibit 3) Hello again. I am here. I'm Nancy Carr, I am here in support of LB308. I believe the intent of the bill is clear, the applications are specific, and the consequences for a failure to follow it are also very clear and specific. As a patriot, I fully agree with the bill's premise, "An informed, loyal, just, and patriotic citizenry is necessary to a strong, stable, just, and prosperous America. Such a citizenry necessitates that every member thereof be fully acquainted with the nation's history and that he or she be in full accord with our form of government and fully aware of the liberties, the opportunities," and I would put the responsibilities, "and the advantages of which we are possessed and the sacrifices and struggles of those through whose efforts these benefits were gained." It is the duty of our schools to follow this law. This, again, I repeat, was exactly the way I was taught through all of my schooling and that's why I became such a patriot as I am. And I want that other children today would receive

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that same education. When I was in school, the schools did teach American history and patriotism. We learned the fundamental duties of citizenship, we also learned the songs and the stories of our country and the form of government which is uniquely American. For many decades, and it has been decades now, not just the past, it's been probably 30 or 40 years, this has not been the case in our public schools. And this is a great concern to me as a patriot and as an educator. In spite of the facts that we have this law on the books, and it is even part of the statute on school accreditation, I have found that it is not being implemented and no consequences have followed. I am in favor of LB308 because these changes will make the school boards, the State School Board of Education, and the superintendent more accountable to the tax paying public. I was at a luncheon forum the other day and my school board member happened to be there, and I asked if he knew who was on the Americanism committee. And he said yeah, knew a couple of them, and he said he was one of them. And I said, well, have you met? And he said, no, we haven't met yet. And so obviously there's not going to be any looking at curriculum or textbooks or etcetera. So in the past I have tried to find out who is on the local Americanism committee and I have tried in the past numerous times and to find out what they were doing because I had lots of big concerns I wanted to share with them and what they were actually doing. And I've been disappointed to learn that it is not a significant committee anymore. And that was really his attitude a lot too, was it wasn't really that important. In fact, he wasn't even sure what it was they were supposed to be doing. LB308 would require them to hold a minimum of three public meetings a year, allow public testimony at one of those meetings, the minutes are to be available to the public, and the approved textbooks must be readily accessible to the public. And I don't know if you're aware of this, but it's very hard for parents to even see textbook materials. They have to go back and back and back trying to see what they are. And that was always one of the things I did when I went to conferences for my children, I always wanted to see the materials that they were studying, look through them, see who published them. All of these are vast improvements over the current situation, by that I mean there are stipulations so that we will be knowledgeable about what is happening. Then there will be greater cooperation and communication between the system and the tax paying public, which has a clear interest in the education being provided by their tax dollars. And there again, I think that's important because not just if you have children in school, but the taxpayers that are paying all of this. And it's a horrendous payment anymore for education, so you want to be sure as Americans that our children at least are being taught about America. Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: I just have a... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Senator Walz. [LB308]

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SENATOR WALZ: Thank you, Chairman Groene. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I always ignore you out of (inaudible). [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: What? [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I can't see you on this side unless I'm looking at you. [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: Oh, I'm sorry. I am kind of interested about the school board member that you talked to, who said that they hadn't even met on Americanism yet. Do you know, did they realize that this was something that they might have to be doing as a school board member when they put their name up for election? [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I'm not sure they put their name up for election. I imagine they were appointed, because it changes every year, the who's on the Americanism committee. [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: (Inaudible). [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: But people who are going on school board know that they are going to have to be on that committee? Do you know that they know that's a...? [LB308]

NANCY CARR: No, I doubt it. But I doubt that they even...unfortunately, I doubt that it's a very important committee and not really, you know... [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: Yeah, that's kind of my concern is that, you know, is it going to be effective to have school board members in charge of if they're not going to meet or...I'm just concerned. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: Well, no, but I think that's why her bill is so important, because there will be meetings and they will be accountable. And the public will have a chance to go and see those things and communicate with them. That's why I believe her bill is so important. [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: You think that. Okay. [LB308]

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NANCY CARR: It's not like that wasn't important to do, even if it was the law. And they're disobeying the law by not doing it. But the important thing is she's putting some bulk into it. [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay, yep. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: So then it will be done and then we can all, I believe, cooperate and communicate and make it an important issue. [LB308]

SENATOR WALZ: Okay, that makes sense. Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? I have one. Nancy, what makes you think they will follow this law if they're not following the existing one? It says now "every school board shall at the beginning of each year appoint for its members a committee of three to be known as committee on Americanism and they shall inspect and approve all textbooks used in the teaching of American history." They're not doing it now. Why would you think, if we pass this law, they wouldn't just thumb their nose at that law too? [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I suppose they could, it's part of their accreditation though. A school can't be accredited unless they follow it. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, they're supposed...there's "shall inspect and approve all textbooks" now. That's part of I would think their accreditation. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I think that's probably true of many things today, that we're not following the law in many areas. And this, you know... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Have you ever gone to a school board meeting and read this to them and said have you inspected? [LB308]

NANCY CARR: No, I've been to lots of school board meetings, not about this particular one. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: But you could, in the public comment, you could read the existing law to them and then ask them, when did you meet and when did the committee on Americanism inspect and approve all textbooks using the teaching of American history. You could ask them that question at your school board meeting. And they should answer you. [LB308]

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NANCY CARR: Well, I don't know, the school board meetings I go to they do not answer, they just listen to your response. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Thanks. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: They're not allowed to answer. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, they are allowed to. It's called free speech, lawyers tell them not to. [LB308]

NANCY CARR: I know. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Next proponent. [LB308]

KATHY WILMOT: Got to get situated, I might slide out and I don't want to. Kathy Wilmot, W-i-l-m-o-t, and I come in support of LB308. And I feel like this is deja vu. This was a subject of discussion when I was on the State Board of Education and I could not believe we had superintendents and things showing up at that meeting saying, oh my gosh, we can't put a flag in every classroom, we can't afford that. And I was just dumbfounded that we didn't have flags in all the classrooms already. This has been around, it's been called an old law, I guess, but it's a very important one. I think it's also important to know there's a difference between history and social studies, and when you read Rule 10, schools are required to have social studies. Now, it does say that that can include instruction in American history or the Americanism that we're talking about, but that's not really a "requirement," it just says it can include that. The survey that was done, I didn't quite hear exactly what the senator said, but I think she said something about they didn't all have a committee. And that was kind of shocking to me too, because this particular statute is referenced in Rule 10. And I guess I'm a little amazed. How did these Department of Education hand out the state aid to those schools if they weren't accredited? How did they get their money? Is nobody watching this? And I think that's why it has to have some teeth in it. And that's what I think the senator is trying to do, get some written documents that people have to look at to prove whether or not these things are happening. Because somehow it's slipping past the Department of Education and their accreditation rule. Also, this thing about old laws intended to rid us of McCarthyism. I guess that really struck a note to me. I don't know if you're read Blacklisted by History. It's a book that was written about McCarthy, it was after all the government documents were released. And you know, up until the point, I guess, of when I read that book, I believed all this stuff I heard about, you know, this guy evidently just saw ghosts under the bed and he was, you know, hyping all this stuff all the time. Go read that book and you'll find out the government documents, when they were released, substantiated almost everything McCarthy said...another reason, I guess, why I think we need to have a strong

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requirement for Americanism in our schools. It has to be, though, included in Rule 10. I know from my time in the State Board of Education schools have a lot of requirements, so I don't really want to badmouth them in that way. But they have a lot of requirements, a lot of things they have to pay attention to, everything costs money, and everything takes their time. But I learned on that board that if it's in Rule 10, that's where the teeth are, that's when they're going to sit up and pay attention. So maybe we just simply have to say, somewhere in the amendment or somewhere, that all of the requirements of this will be in Rule 10. I mean, it references that number, why it's not happening...I don't know if there's a conversation the Legislature needs to have with a department or exactly what needs to happen. But something needs to happen. And it's important to look at your textbooks, you can't believe what's involved in textbooks sometimes. I remember one, and this is off Americanism, but it was a health textbook that we were talking about having on the State Board of Education. I finally asked to see that health teacher's manual and I came back and taught the board one of the lessons out of that book. They were all gung ho to put this in our 4th grade classrooms. I went back and taught them the lesson and to do that, I had to pass out condoms to every one of them. And then at the end I was supposed to ask them to please put it on their arm and see, so they could see how much it stretches and fits all sizes. So it's important that we have somebody riding herd on the textbooks that our kids have in their schools, because that's where they're learning things. And they are either going to be things we don't want them to learn or things that do tell them how great America is, so it helps them know how to be the kind of people you are someday, and be the leaders that we're going to need to keep the freedoms that we have now. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Any questions, please, Senators? Seeing none, thank you very much. Additional proponents? How many more will testify? Could we see hands, please? Okay, thank you. [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: This time I have a written testimony that will be passed out to you. And I must thank you again for allowing me to come up and speak for the third time today. It's been a long day and I appreciate your efforts and focusing and listening to all of us. You have a very difficult job, I must say. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Please spell your name and state it, please. [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: (Exhibit 4) I'm Maxwell Smith, M-a-x-w-e-l-l S-m-i-t-h. [LB308]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: I am a freshman in high school and with nearly 12 years of public schooling behind me, I can testify that LB308 has not even been followed recently. I have always

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been a proud patriot who enjoyed learning of my country's history and its forefathers, along with reasons of why we're the greatest country in the world. In our current schooling, it's hardly possible for a student to get the opportunity to even properly learn many of these things. In my experiences, the schools have not taught what it is to be an American, but more so what it is to be a global citizen, which is something we simply are not. You cannot have two masters. You can be a global citizen or you can be an American. We no longer celebrate former President George Washington's birthday or former President Abraham Lincoln's or even Veterans Day, many of these holidays that should be so cherished, in my opinion. We no longer sing the national anthem or other patriotic songs in school. It's an absolute travesty that students are losing the knowledge of our forefathers and why they died proud Americans by the thousands on both land and sea. As I've stated before, most all my knowledge of this country was gained from outside sources because I was left hungry for knowledge from schools failing to teach about our country. But I also must stress that many of the teachers are not at fault. But it's many of the...or lots of the bureaucracy and issues in upper administration, the federal government, and state legislatures that are at fault and should be concerned that...and in many cases should be held accountable for this. If we support and enforce this bill today, I believe it will drastically better the education for our youth and open up a new and brighter future for us. Students could understand the events that our forefathers went through and learn of why our country was built the way it was. This is something our curriculum, I feel, has failed to teach, and a civics curriculum that includes students coming out of high school not even being able to pass their own citizenship test. In conclusion, I believe you should support LB308. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? Do you do the Pledge of Allegiance every day at Southeast? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: Yes, we do. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: You do. In the classroom, your first class of the day? Or at an assembly? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: It's third period, it's optional. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: It's optional? What do you mean, optional? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: If you don't want to do the pledge, you don't have to. You can leave the classroom or stay seated. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: But it's every day? [LB308]

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MAXWELL SMITH: Yes, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: What holidays do you celebrate or been brought to your attention? If Veterans Day happens to be in November, do they bring it up to you? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: No, it is not. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Presidents' Day? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: No, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Martin Luther King Day? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: No, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: They don't even do Martin Luther King Day? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: No, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: So it's a just a sterile environment of show up and go to class and go home? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: When it comes to civics, yes. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: All right, thank you. Senator Ebke. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: How long have you been in Lincoln? Your whole life? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: Yes. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: So did you, in elementary school, did you go to any of these things? Did you have any of these celebrations? [LB308]

MAXWELL SMITH: I don't believe so, ma'am. [LB308]

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SENATOR EBKE: Presidents' Day or Martin Luther King Day? Okay. Thanks. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other questions? Thank you, young man. Any more proponents? [LB308]

TOM NEBELSICK: (Exhibit 5) Good evening again, my name is Tom, T-o-m, Nebelsick, N-e-b-e-l-s-i-c-k. I want to thank everybody that's still in attendance this afternoon, that's unusual in my world. As you'll have in your hands soon, this is what I have to say in front of you. I'm here in support of...I crossed out LB308 and wrote in AM675, I believe I am supporting both of those. Although this bill has been on the books since 1949, I have learned it is not being correctly implemented. And the consequences for not doing so are not being applied, even though they are clearly spelled out in the current law. Senator Brasch's amendment would provide significant improvement to the existing bill and would contribute to a more thoroughly informed populace, as it would accomplish the proper teaching of American history and patriotism. This would benefit both students and tax paying citizens who deserve the positive effects of its intent. An additional comment that I have is I know of one person who would have like to have testified to support this bill, but they ran across the same problem that you did, Senator Groene. And that is this bill isn't being enforced, this law isn't being enforced now. Why would it be with this amendment? And if I may say so, sir, I'm astonished at your response to that. Because it appears that the responsibility for enforcing this law falls directly on my shoulders. That's all I have to say. Questions? [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: As a citizen, the citizen should show up, vote, go to their school board meetings, stand up and be heard to make sure their elected officials are obeying the law. Is that what you meant by clearly on your shoulders? [LB308]

TOM NEBELSICK: Yes, sir, it is. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Have you gone to a school board...you know, I'm not... [LB308]

TOM NEBELSICK: Several, yes. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Have you ever thought about bringing this up to them? [LB308]

TOM NEBELSICK: I will at the next possible occasion. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. I appreciate you doing that, sir. [LB308]

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TOM NEBELSICK: And no, I don't know if any of them know this or not. But why do they not know this, the school board members? Astonishing. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other proponents? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Good evening. I just really just want to thank everybody for staying here so late in the evening. I don't know how these hearings usually go, but indeed... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Can you name and spell it? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, my name again, Roger Kingsley, R-o-g-e-r K-i-n-g-s-l-e-y. Yes, I currently live in West Point, Nebraska, and this LB308 is really the one that kind of I guess resonated with me and what I truly came here to talk about. And as I was processing this, you know, I thought what is it that we're dealing, what is it that we can maybe put our arms around, put our hands around? What is Americanism? Because that seems to be of some disagreement, I believe, in all of this. And as I thought about that, I thought, you know, I come from a small town not far away from where I live now. And you know, it's where I lived, grew up, and had many relatives there. That's where I was educated through high school. And of course, I'll always have strong, you know, a soft spot in heart, so to speak. I'll always have feelings toward that because it's home. Okay? And I think Americanism is very little different from that. It simply, you know, that whole thing is something that I just naturally am drawn to. Some others may not be. But Americanism, I think, is the education of people to have that same set of feelings, that same sense where they can have that same understanding of who we are, of what this nation is, of where we came from, and a history of it. As I spoke earlier, it truly is important that we don't lose that. As another gentleman said, and it's been said many times, those of us who don't follow and understand history are bound to repeat it. And it doesn't need to be that way. I think a lot of these sayings are more than just some nebulous colloquialism. They're true, once again, they're based in fact. And I think it's important for us to understand that. So I really can't speak of the nuts and bolts of the exact changes to LB308, but I can...and I came here to speak to just to the importance of doing that. I spent four years on the school board of the town I live in now. I did not know this law existed. I mean, shame on me, I'll stand and I'll tell that to anybody. Shame on me for not...I was on the Americanism committee. That is how, well, and I'm going to make enemies here, but within the education community by and large, that's how this is treated. We'll just pretend like it doesn't really exist. Are putting more teeth in this thing going to change? How do you change a person's heart? I can guarantee you, if people held accountable will act on that accountability. That would be my hope indeed, it would hold people more accountable through this. I'm very much in favor of LB308 and I think it would serve us all to pass. [LB308]

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SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any questions? So you were on the school board of a public school? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Did you go to training seminars put on by the Association of School Boards? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Yes, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: And they never brought up any of the subcommittees that statutes you were supposed to be on? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: None of them that I ever went to. No, sir. And once again, I'm sorry, I won't make any friends saying it, but the...oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: So you...one time you did your duty of being on the Americanism committee. What did they tell you it was when they put you on that subcommittee? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: It really, you know, we had a number of these. Some were more active than others. That was one that was just completely inactive. It wasn't the only one, only subcommittee on the... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: You were on this subcommittee, your name was put on it, but you never, ever met? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Never. Not once. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: So the Department of Education, I would think, would be responsible for some of these, keeping making sure the schools do this. But you never remember them having any guide to being a school board member and what your responsibilities were? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Yeah, I mean, quite honestly the NSEA...or I'm sorry, the NSAA had all manner of guides of, you know, being an effective school board member, in my opinion, of marginal effectiveness really. In my years on the school board I would have to say it was educational, certainly, but it was also very disappointing when I realized how little control, by and large, how little control the local school board really had over it. It's highly, most schools I

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can assure you, are highly dependent on the administration to run smoothly and most boards will trust that administration, which is all good and proper. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Were you here for all the bills? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Yes, sir. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Were you kind of amazed that this amendment to the first bill, LB14, was not written by citizens, but by employees of the social studies, employees of our school districts, and not by their employers to give them direction of what we want taught? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: It doesn't surprise me. I guess that's all I have to say. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, sir. Any other questions? [LB308]

ROGER KINGSLEY: Thank you very much. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any other proponents? [LB308]

ED HERNANDEZ: Hello, my name is Ed Hernandez, E-d H-e-r-n-a-n-d-e-z. And while all this is going on, I'm trying to remember back what did I study in school. You know, it's been a long time ago, it must have been more than 40 years ago. I think, by the way, I'm an import, I came from California. It's going to be going on 10 years ago now, but we took one semester of American government and one semester of American history. And I got an A in both of those classes, but American government I took in summer school, so that was like a flash, because summer school only lasts for a few weeks and then you're done. But I don't remember learning anything about civics, for example, how our local government worked. Because after my first daughter was born, I looked around and I said, boy, this place is a mess. You can't have any idea what a mess looks like until you've lived in California. You know, they have streets and they have sidewalks and people mow their lawns, and all that looks good, but look a little bit deeper and it's a mess. And so I decided, well, I'm going to start volunteering to see how I can help make a difference. And after five years of volunteering everywhere I could, I started to learn a little bit about civics, about our government, about how people interact. Because, you know, politics is simply us getting together and deciding how we're going to work together to govern ourselves. We're supposed to be self-governing. And a friend of mine comes to me and he says they want to flood my girlfriend's farmhouse, can you help me? So here I went off with my sword and I figured out why they wanted to flood his house. And so I figured out who the group was that was opposing this and so I went to their meeting, I invited myself, there were lawyers and county

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school board members and landowners, farmers, all these different people were meeting. And I had to go there and tell them what they could do to save their homes and their businesses and their farms. We put a resolution on the ballot, an initiative on the ballot, and prevented the city from flooding these people. And they weren't even...they didn't even live in the district any of them, in the city, they lived in the county. So I had to put my name as a proponent because these people weren't even able to be represented on this vote. And we won by 70 percent. And I went on from there and volunteered more and more, next thing I knew, people were looking for me. Hey, they want to raise our water rates, can you help us? They want to put me out of business, can you help me? Because people don't understand what's going on in government, they don't understand the basic civics of how our government, local, state, federal government is set up and so they have no idea what they can do. So when they look out across at a problem, it looks overwhelming, and so they just stay home, check out because there's nothing they can do. And I think that LB308 would be a benefit to Nebraska because it would help people to recognize how the government works and how they would be able to affect change that would benefit Nebraskans. Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions for the testifier? What brought you to Nebraska? [LB308]

ED HERNANDEZ: Well, we escaped from California. I looked around and it was such a big mess. We were fighting everywhere, but we were losing ground continuously. So I just decided it was time to take my family and move, and so we moved to Nebraska. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: To help pay our high taxes. Thank you for coming. [LB308]

ED HERNANDEZ: Yes. So now we get to pay high taxes, thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions? Any more proponents? Any opponents? [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Senator Groene, members of the committee, John, J-o-h-n, Bonaiuto, B-o-n-a-i-u-t-o, representing the Nebraska Association of School Boards, testifying as an opponent of LB308 but not un-American, so want to get that in the record. The School Boards Association takes this very seriously. If there are not boards...if there are boards that are not following this law, they should be. We stress to boards that they need to follow this law and I can assure you that at new board member workshops and at Back to the Basics of School Law workshops that this law is brought to school boards' attention. And as sure as I'm sitting here, I can tell you that every school board will hear about the law that's required, even if this doesn't change or if LB14 is not advanced, which we support the direction Senator Krist's LB14 takes. We will make sure boards are much more aware and involved in this area and we'll do that through our publications

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and we will make sure it's on the agenda of various meetings. I can appreciate that and it's going to be different in different size districts how they will handle this, but they need to do it. I also can appreciate in some districts that, where you have the charge to carefully examine and inspect and approve all textbooks, you could be on the board eight years. And if your district doesn't buy a new textbook (laugh), there's not going to be a textbook approval. But that's not an excuse. It's just saying that it's going to be handled in different ways in different districts and we need to help boards, as an organization that represents school boards, do a better job with this issue and the existing law or if this law moves forward. In LB14 and the amendment, it did not do away with the law or the requirement, and so there still has to be an Americanism committee and they still have to meet and talk about important things that deal with Americanism and learning and instruction for social studies, patriotism. With that, I'll conclude my testimony. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions? Doesn't say anywhere in this law any new textbooks. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: No, it just says textbooks, but... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Yeah. So if you're a new committee, you should be reviewing the old textbooks. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: If it's...and they could do that very...yes. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: What do you mean they could do it? It says they shall do it. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Well, carefully inspect, approve all textbooks used teaching American history in school. And for the school board, usually it is the new textbooks that come before the board. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: It doesn't say that. The law says: inspect and approve all textbooks used in teaching of American history. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And we will make sure that that law is... [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: (Inaudible) unless you want to bring a law next year that says "new," it doesn't say that. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: No. We... [LB308]

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SENATOR GROENE: And you guys follow the law, do you not? [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Absolutely. That's...there's no question about that, Senator. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Well, it says you're supposed to inspect it, the committee is, every year. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: And we will make sure that that is reinforced. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: And you're not going to tell them "could" or "should"; you're going to say "shall"? [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Yes. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: You'll raise the levies then. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: What's that? [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: Better raise the levies then so we can get new textbooks every year. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Doesn't say new. They're supposed to look at existing textbooks. [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: But they have to approve them. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: What's that? [LB308]

SENATOR EBKE: If you approve them. What if you don't approve them? [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: If they don't approve them, then they bring it to their employee, the superintendent, that they need to look at new textbooks. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: My interpretation when I looked at "approve," I was thinking new and...but I agree with... [LB308]

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SENATOR GROENE: But don't you think it would be a good idea that a new school board member knows what's in the textbooks, the existing textbook, by examining them and inspecting them? [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Yes. I would agree with that, Senator. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you. Any other questions? Senator Pansing Brooks. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you for coming, Mr. Bonaiuto. Do you have a feel for...I mean we heard the testimony of that young girl and her...there was a young girl who's testified that they've done some study of their five schools and 200 people, most of them fail, 80 percent failed? Do you have any idea what district, why that would happen, what happened? [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: I don't, Senator. And I was just hearing that as an anecdote and so I don't know how that was done or how it worked out, if it was a class project or maybe it was a civics project. I'm not sure. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: And, of course, the question is whether the kids took it seriously. If it was just, you know, I mean if...I know that sometimes kids would hand something out and everybody would answer... [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Oh, yeah. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: ...one thing and then throw it away and just say I'm not going to spend more time doing this. So if it was a requirement by a class, that's one thing. If it's just some kid's project, getting people to comply with that is very difficult. So I, you know, that's the part that worries me. Having seen what LPS does in their American...well, I mean I watched all the courses: civics, AP advanced government, AP world history, AP American history. I mean I watched that whole thing, and there's a lot of great work coming out. I think our social studies departments in LPS are some of the best that there are, so. But if we're having issues around the state, and there's no question that people need to understand the Constitution, I, you know, I wonder whether 80 percent of the people I know could pass that test. And if you haven't studied it in law school or in your doctoral thesis, then I think that it's, you know, these are some questions that a lot of people wouldn't be able to answer. And again, it's important to look at our history, at what made America what it is, our democracy. Whether you want to call it a republic or a democracy, we do have a constitution that I value highly and the rights therein are important.

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And again, I think it's important for our country to understand those rights, especially in the Bill of Rights and the other rights, so. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Absolutely. [LB308]

SENATOR PANSING BROOKS: Thank you. [LB308]

JOHN BONAIUTO: Thank you. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: (Exhibits 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) Any other questions? Thank you, sir. Any other opponents? No more opponents? I got to read into the record, for support we received letters from S. Wayne Smith, Lincoln; Ron and Lynette Nash; Linda Dietz of Lincoln; and John Nebelsick of Lincoln. Opponents was the ACLU. Any neutral testimony? Would you like to close, Senator Brasch? [LB308]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. I do want to thank everyone who's come forward today and testified on this bill and the two bills before. I want to thank the committee--it looks like we have a full committee once again--for your attention here to Senator Krist's bill and the two I've introduced. I did want to go back a little bit and explain that, when Senator Krist introduced his civics bill, I had personally spoke with Matt Blomstedt, the director of Education, and Brian Halstead, his assistant, about my bill. And on their list they had Krist's bill, they had my bill, they had my Americanism bill. And six days ago, on March 14, is when I saw Senator Krist's bill had the amendment of Americanism incorporated into his bill. I'm disappointed I did not hear from the director of Education or Brian. And Senator Krist said these are amendments made by them, not by him. And quite frankly, when I did see the amendment and hear today, when I hear it's modernizing Americanism, I apologize but I think it's mutilating Americanism. I'm so disappointed. I'm appalled that I did not get information in advance from either of them. And I believe that Americanism is growing more important today, every day as we are looking at a global world. Our children and the next generations need to know and must know how important our constitution, our Declaration of Independence, how our country was built, how it was founded, that our freedom was not free, and that we must continue to fight and be diligent and especially aware of inspired terrorism and those who would want to teach us to hate our country. That's why we need Americanism. That's why we need the amendments. That's why we need good textbooks. My administrative aide told me, when he was on a tour in D.C., at George Washington Presidential Library that the tour guide told him, in the audience, he said of 50 people that if you pick up any random public school textbook in America there is more information and more pages dedicated to Marilyn Monroe than to George Washington, the founder and father of our country. I am going to look for a textbook. I do want to validate this but that he would say that or she, I don't know, in a public setting. And to return to levies, we need

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good books. Home school parents, they approve their kids' books that they use and they don't get to raise their levies. They also pay their property taxes. They also pay their income taxes. We do need to look at what we present in front of our students. We do need to make sure that the next generation leaves this country better than we found it. Thank you, those on this committee and those who came forward. [LB308]

SENATOR GROENE: Any questions for Senator Brasch? Thank you, Senator Brasch, for bringing the bill. That closes the hearing for today. [LB308]