

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

General Affairs Committee
January 23, 2017

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on General Affairs met at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, January 23, 2017, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Tyson Larson, Chairperson; Burke Harr, Vice Chairperson; Lydia Brasch; Bob Krist; Merv Riepe; and Justin Wayne. Senators absent: Carol Blood and Dan Quick.

SENATOR LARSON: Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. I am Senator Tyson Larson of O'Neill, the Chair of the committee. Committee members on the committee that will be joining us soon are Senator Blood of Bellevue; Riepe of Ralston. I have Vice Chair Senator Harr to my right, of Omaha; Josh Eickmeier, my committee legal counsel; to my far left, Aaron Bos, the committee clerk; Senator Quick, has a bill in another committee, of Grand Island; Senator Brasch of Bancroft; Senator Krist of Omaha; and Senator Wayne of Omaha. There is one sign-in sheet located on the tables at the back of the room. Please read it carefully and select the correct box. The first box is for anyone testifying today. The second box are for those not testifying but are submitting written testimony instead, and the third box is for those who are not testifying or submitting written testimony, but want their position on the issue included on the committee record. When it is your turn to testify, please give your sign-in sheet to the committee clerk. This will help us maintain a more accurate public record. After each appointee testifies, the Chair will ask for public testimony in support, in opposition, and in a neutral capacity. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Please tell us your name and spell your name, first and last. Also please tell us whom you're representing, if anyone. We are using the light system for hearings. I'll give those that are trying...that are going through the appointment process five minutes. Testifiers in favor or opposition of those appointees will receive three minutes, which will be represented by a green light when you begin, and an amber light when you have one minute remaining, and a red light when your time is up. Please turn off your cell phones, or keep any other electronic devices that could make noise, on silent. Please keep your conversations to a minimum or take them into the hallway. The General Affairs Committee is a paperless committee. Therefore, we prefer to accept our handouts and written testimony electronically due to this policy. If you would like to submit something but only have paper copies, we will accommodate you. We also do not allow visual aids or other displays items. Because the committee is paperless, senators are allowed or even encouraged to use their electronic devices during the hearings. Thank you for your cooperation and we will begin today's hearings with appointees to the Arts Council. And first up is Melissa Marvin. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. [CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: Oh, thank you. Good afternoon, everybody. Melissa Marvin, M-e-l-i-s-s-a M-a-r-v-i-n. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR LARSON: Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your interest in the arts.
[CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: Oh, you bet. I am a native Omaha and I have been active in the community and in our state for going on 30 years. So I do in addition to having been in corporate America, I grew up in a family that was a big advocate of giving back to others. So that has been a concurrent priority for me with my professional life. I think I sat on...I think over 20 boards over a 30-year period and I have been a huge advocate of the arts and humanities for the last 15 years. And it's been a privilege to serve on Nebraska Arts Council and I hope to have the privilege of sitting on it for the second term. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you, Ms. Marvin. Any questions from the committee? Real quick I see that you are a reappointment. What has been your...your favorite thing about the Arts Council in your last term? [CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: Probably, I've had the privilege of the last two, if not three, running the major grants. Particular committee...I mean, aside from the fact that I've loved getting to see the broad aspect of what the arts are within the state, but then having the chance to sit and chair over that particular committee, you really do get a better understanding of the actual operations of every arts organization around the state and then an opportunity to really get to know it and where those funds are disbursed. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Are those packages for us? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: They were e-mailed out to our...Seeing no other questions...oh, Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Chairman, thank you. And thank you for your interest and willingness to be reappointed. What have been your greatest challenges in the past with the Council? Is there anything, any barriers that, or will holds that you would like to see things changed?
[CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: Well, one. It's just in terms of positive, Suzanne Wise. It's just been a...she's just been an incredible leader and advocate and the people I have served with have just been the best of the best. So that's been a real positive. And I think always in terms of challenges is the amount of funding. You know, when you're getting in there and having to disburse money

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out, there's just a finite amount to be able to provide out. So if it was a perfect world, we would certainly be able to 100 percent fulfill every qualified request, but that's not always the given reality. So like any nonprofit, it's always an opportunity to try to figure out how can we provide the very best with the given funds we have. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Do you engage in fund-raising efforts or...? [CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: For the Nebraska Arts Council, we are not particularly...we aren't a funding engine in terms of raising money. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Is it strictly state funding? [CONFIRMATION]

MELISSA MARVIN: It's strictly state funding, but I will say that I have been an active fundraiser in the Omaha community and then also for the Nebraska Humanities, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment for a good 20 years. So I've had a lot of fund-raising experience. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. I have no other questions. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Any further questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Ms. Marvin. Do we have any proponents on Ms. Marvin? Opponents? Neutral? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on Ms. Melissa Marvin. Up next is Candy Henning. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. Spell your first and last name and tell us a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

CANDY HENNING: My name is Candy Henning, it's C-a-n-d-y H-e-n-n-i-n-g. And first, I'd like to thank...first, I'd like to say I'm honored to be considered for reappointment to the Arts Council. I have enjoyed my time on the Arts Council immensely. It's an organization that when it was founded, what the council when it was founded, it was founded by some incredibly smart and dedicated people and some of those people you may recall, Senator Don Larsen (sic: Pederson) and Senator LaVon Crosby, which I'm sure none of you remember, but maybe you've read about them in the archives or something. They did a great job and the staff and Suzanne have done a wonderful job of continuing the work of the Arts Council. I would maybe like to clarify one thing. The Arts Council does receive state support, but we also receive public donations and those donations come in through the Nebraska Endowment Fund. And this was part of how the Arts Council was set up so that it would be a matching of state funds and private funds. And it's because of that system that was put into place that the Nebraska Arts Council is the envy of most of our surrounding states and affiliate states. Many of them did not set up an

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endowment fund and as budgets come and go, and budgets are flush and budgets are not, they lack the funding that they need to support the arts across their state. But Nebraska has continued to be able to fund at a reasonable level the arts organizations and individual artists across the state because of that foresight and the way it was all put into place. I spent the first 22 years of my life in Dundee County. I graduated from UNL, spent a few years in Kansas City, returned to Lincoln, spent a few years in Grand Island and then...but I've been in Lincoln 33 years now, so I guess I'm probably a Lincolnite. Is there anything else you'd like to know? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Questions from the committee? Well, you're a reappointment as well, correct? [CONFIRMATION]

CANDY HENNING: Yes, reappointment. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: And your time in the Arts Council, what has been...what have you found most interesting? [CONFIRMATION]

CANDY HENNING: Part of what I find interesting is learning about all of the amazing things that the arts organizations and art events that are going on across the state. And we have a lot. I don't know if you've traveled the state and found out what's going on, but we have a lot of small communities that are doing great work. And part of that great work is made possible by the Arts Council and the funding that they get from the Arts Council. And they don't get 100 percent. It typically comes as a portion of their fund-raising and the Arts Council funds. So I've enjoyed that. I've also learned a great deal just from...how the Arts Council is operated. Again, Suzanne and her staff do a great job. We have a real challenge, as you all know, in this state. We have a small population in comparison to the land mass that we have. And so it's sometimes a struggle to meet...or to maybe fund everything that we'd like to fund. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you. Any questions? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman. And thank you for your willingness to serve again. When you were speaking it just made me wonder, what do you believe to date has been the greatest achievement or one of the projects that you believe has made a difference? Is there one that stands out? I know there's multitude that you do. [CONFIRMATION]

CANDY HENNING: There's a lot. One of the things I think the state can...many things the state can be proud of. One is the 1 percent for the arts that we have put into place. This has brought quality art...when a public...when a building is built that is...they need to spend 1 percent, they need to put 1 percent aside for art for that building. And so this has brought art across the state.

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Rather than buildings built in Wayne, Nebraska, or Omaha or Lincoln or Imperial or wherever that's built, there is an art component and I think that's one...that's a big achievement for us.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Sounds wonderful. Thank you for your continued work and service. I have no other questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Seeing no more from the committee, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

CANDY HENNING: Thank you, Senator Larson. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Do we have any proponents? Opponents? Neutral? And that will close the hearing on Candy Henning. Next up, Paula Pflueger. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Thank you. I'm Paula Pflueger, P-a-u-l-a, Pflueger is P-f-l-u-e-g-e-r.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your interest in Arts Council.
[CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Well, thank you. I appreciate you hearing us today and I'm excited and honored to be asked to serve again on a second term. I grew up in northeast Nebraska. I've always...the performing arts have been a part of my life since I was born, as my parents are both very accomplished musicians. So that's been a big part of my life. I think that's something I can bring to the table with the Nebraska Arts Council. In addition, I've been in business for over 30 years as a financial advisor, so I think that helps, too, having some knowledge of balance sheets and financial statements because there is a real high fiduciary responsibility for us to make sure that the dollars that we do have available, that as much as possible is going to promote the arts across the state of Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Senator Krist.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for coming and thanks for your continued service. As I'm reading through here, I see you're no stranger to the Arts Council. You were appointed by two other Governors as well as this Governor. How many total terms have you served?
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PAULA PFLUEGER: Actually just one other appointment, just one term. This would be my second. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Oh, okay. All right. I'm confusing the names. [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Yeah, my mother before me also served two terms on the Nebraska Arts Council. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Okay. Good. Well, thanks for your family's service then. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: You bet. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Real quick, in your interests I see international travel. What has been your favorite country to visit? [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Oh, gosh. It's hard to narrow down. Probably my very favorite city to visit is Paris, but I also love Italy. I love to just travel and see the world and enjoy arts around the globe. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Italy has plenty of that. [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Yes, surely. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Seeing any further questions? Thank you, Ms. Pflueger. [CONFIRMATION]

PAULA PFLUEGER: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Proponents? Opponents? Neutral? That will close the hearing on Ms. Pflueger and next, Ms. Reven Wright. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: Reven, R-e-v-e-n, Wright, W-r-i-g-h-t. Good afternoon. My name is Reven Wright and I have been serving on the Nebraska Arts Council for two years and it has been an honor and joy. My husband and I moved to Kearney 14 years ago from Honolulu, Hawaii, and have participated and committed into the arts of our community, enjoying fabulous entertainment

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at the Merryman Performing Arts Center, volunteering at Trails and Rails Museum, being a committee member of the semi-annual MONA Spirit event, watching our children perform with the Academy of Children's Theatre, and financially supporting the arts in our community in various ways. During my term, I have attended quarterly meetings and have had the fortune of chairing the Arts in Education grants and serving on the Governor's Residence Expedition Committee. Being involved in these programs has been extremely enlightening and educational. Not having served on the board of this magnitude, there has been a tremendous learning curve and I feel as though I've barely scratched the surface. I can honestly say I'm passionate about having a voice from the middle of our state. I'm committed to ensuring all Nebraskans despite persons of geographic or socioeconomic position, with a concentration on our youth to have the opportunity and access to enjoy, participate, and indulge in the arts in our great state.

[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Any questions from the committee? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman, and thank you for your willingness to serve once more. You had mentioned programs for children? [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: And as senators, we get a lot of thank-you notes from the schools for all the programs and participation. Is that a part of what the Art Council sponsors? Is it...been a tradition for how many years? I've been here seven and I always get wonderful thank-you notes. [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: I don't know the ins and outs again being relatively new. It is asked that everybody does, that all the children that do receive the grant, or the monies in the programs, do write a thank-you note, not only to the senators, but also to the Nebraska Arts and for the performing artists that do and come into their schools, you know. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: So do you get a note of thanks from them? [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: Well, as our council as a whole, I would say yes. Specifically, no, but I take it to heart. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you for your work and thank for your willingness to serve the arts. [CONFIRMATION]

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REVEN WRIGHT: It's an honor and I thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Senator Harr. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HARR: Thank you. Just...I don't have a lot of reason to go out to Kearney, but I do make a point to go out for MONA. I think it is a really neat event and I want to thank you. I don't know how much you're involved in it day to day, but it is a wonderful event. So, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: Thank you. It's one of our pride and joys. We appreciate you coming. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Any further questions? Seeing none, thank you, Ms. Wright. [CONFIRMATION]

REVEN WRIGHT: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Seeing any proponents? Opponents? Neutral? That will close the hearing on Ms. Wright. And we are going to move to Mr. Bader. Welcome back to the General Affairs Committee. Please spell your first and last name and give us a little bit about yourself and why the Arts Council. [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Thank you. And it's Stephen, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, last name Bader, B-a-d-e-r. Thank you. My interest in the arts have been for well over a decade now. In fact, the arts are pretty much what I attribute my immense amount of extroversion. It's something that transforms people's lives. It's something that is very, very special. During high school I was involved in about 12 plays and musicals and was the treasurer of the theater department at Millard South High School, as well an inductee into the International Thespian Society of which I am still a cardholder, part of the troupe. In addition to that, when I went to...initially to Lincoln for school, I was involved in attending a lot of the school productions as well as taking a few theater classes. I've also had the privilege of being able to attend some very, very beautiful shows here in Omaha both at the Rose and the Orpheum. I also like to keep in touch with my music professors as well as my teacher. Originally that inspired me both in middle school and in high school. Both of them are wonderful, wonderful people. Why I look to be a part of it, why I applied and why I'm so excited, should the opportunity present itself, first I'll point to the enthusiasm of the previous testimonies. I like the fact that I got to hear people who are applying for reappointment to just say how much joy it brought to them. I hope to experience that, I intend to experience that should you allow me that opportunity. I currently serve on the Judicial Resources Commission

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and I would like to be a part of this so that I can give a unique voice specifically with regards to grants towards educational purposes and to those institutions. I have an absolute love for the arts. I'm the kind of person who on a vacation will actually spend a day going to an art museum. I'm just that into it. And I feel like I have the unique skills and passion for it that I'll be able to succeed and be of service for this beautiful state. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Any questions from the committee? Senator Riepe. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR RIEPE: Thank you for being here. You had talked...I heard a little bit about some judiciary. Is that an advisory council? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Yes, it's a different Governor's board, but I didn't have to give a testimony for it. I've been meeting with them a few times as some judges have retired and there will be one coming up again in February. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR RIEPE: So if confirmed, would you continue to serve on that judiciary panel or whatever it was? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Yes, I would...I would want and intend to help out with both. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR RIEPE: Do you currently serve or want to serve on additional councils as well or advisory groups or...? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: That intention is always out there. I have the passion to do so. Should additional opportunities come up, I will always be willing to step into that role, Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR RIEPE: Okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman Larson, and welcome and thank you for your willingness to serve. I see that your occupation is a key holder at Volcanic Peppers, LLC. What is a key holder? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: Is it a keyboard or is it you're the locksmith? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: The latter. Thank you. Thank you. I'm very, very happy to talk about Volcanic Peppers. My dad, he had a very, very comfortable job but he always wanted to be his own boss and with the entrepreneurial spirit, wisdom, and a lot of hard work, he trailblazed a hobby and a love for spice into our current business which has a farm of 6,000 pepper plants, as well as our presence in the Hy-Vee grocery chain. And we even formally export to both Australia and Canada. It's a grown here, made here, very pro-Nebraskan business. I get to use my creative talents to market the business. It's a family business. That's one of my favorite parts. I've been able to get us to be on the front page of the World-Herald, as well as some stories on Channel 6 WOWT, as well as KETV, and as we speak, there's a story that's being developed at the store for Action 3 that will be shown this afternoon. And the reason why it's garnered that attention is because it's all based around quality, it's all based on honest and sincere and tremendous customer service, and we always do right, and we always wanted to make something that really put Nebraska first. And that mindset of you can do anything has been instilled in me by my father and the rest of my family. They're all hardworking, all very near and dear to my heart, and I'm hopefully going to be able to transfer some of that to this council. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: So, I still...the key holder, so you are a business partner is what you're saying, or is there a...? [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Yeah, it's all in the family. I will say that that's as someone who has a key to the store, but basically it's in the family. It's a family business. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay. And all members are key holders. [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay. Very good. Well, thank you again. That's an amazing story of your family's driven business and I hope you can share that passion with the Humanities and Arts Council. Thank you again. [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHEN BADER: Absolutely. Thank you, Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: I have no other questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you, Senator Brasch. Seeing no other questions, thank you for your time. [CONFIRMATION]

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STEPHEN BADER: Thank you so much, everybody. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Do I have any proponents? Opponents? Neutral? That will close the hearing on Mr. Bader, and last is Ms. Helen Abbot Feller for the State Racing Commission. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. Please spell your name and tell us a little bit why you're interested in the... [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: Chairman Larson and members of the General Affairs Committee, my name is Helen Abbott Feller, H-e-l-e-n A-b-b-o-t-t F-e-l-l-e-r. This is a reappointment as well. I think this is my third, maybe my fourth appointment on this commission. I grew up in the racehorse business. My dad was a...we bred horses and we had a farm in Omaha that I worked directly with the track. And so, I've been in the...watched it in the heyday, and watched it in its "unheyday," and I've enjoyed coming back and being on this commission to reacquaint myself with a lot of people that I used to do business with and they're still bringing it out here in Nebraska which I'm always impressed with. So that's my history. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you, Ms. Abbott Feller. I recognize all the names. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: Yeah, actually my last name is Feller, but if I used it as my middle name, then it would always become Helen Feller and it would get mixed up with the Helen Keller, so I kind of kept that Abbott in there. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: So how are you related to Chris? [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: My brother. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: I figured. I used to work with him on a few issues, so worked well with him. Senator Krist. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you, Chair. This is an agricultural-based state. We have a State Fair, yet we don't have any horse racing at the State Fair. When are we going to correct that? [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: It's really a shame, isn't it? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: It is a shame. [CONFIRMATION]

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HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: I think that there's a confusion on how to make racing grow and to run a racetrack, to run a facility is very expensive. So to do...it's not something that you want to do because it's losing money to run a facility. And to do that you need to bring in extra income from the simulcasting and things. So it has not been...like Lincoln opened up a track. They need to run so many races a year, but they are supposed to have...extend that meet, but it's expensive because you have to have barns, you have to have all this stuff going on. And so it behooves them to continue simulcasting and I think that's kind of too bad because that's not the intention. The intention is to grow racing and to have veterinarians and hay and everything else, but to do that it's really kind of a double-edged sword because we used to have the whole dollar and it all came in to parimutuel, but now we have to share that dollar with other kinds of gambling. And to make it work again, Senator Krist, I think we have to look at expanding at gambling and taking a percentage of that gambling back into racing, which is what has made it successful to other states. I don't think we're ever going to eliminate a lot of the gambling choices that we have anymore, but to make it viable to run a race track and the cost of running a race track, we need more of that dollar back. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: I guess we'll have plenty of conversation about gambling in this committee throughout the next couple of years, I'm sure. But my point is, and I'd like to put it on the record and maybe send it back to the commissioners, I became interested in horse racing as a young child going to Aksarben, not to bet, but to watch the gala events in front of me because I was too young to bet. I used to love coming to the State Fair when it was in Lincoln because they raced horses and the family got to sit and watch an event, as I say, for kicks. I understand that gambling is a part of the structure, but I would argue that all those people who want to make agriculture big in the state of Nebraska need to realize that there are so many of those people who are involved in agriculture that are interested in horses. And that if it is indeed supposed to be a family event, I'm not sure how many tractor pulls make money, but what happens at the State Fair is bringing people together and watching and being proud of the agriculture. So, sorry I made a point on your nomination and approval of your appointment, but I think it's important because years ago when I was on this committee and every time I've had a chance to say sometime on the mike, I think it's disingenuous to have a State Fair and not have all of agriculture. And a point, I think, is that the barns are there and that the track is there, so. [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: It's a great facility. I, as well, grew up on the backside in the sandbox. I do not gamble. I'm not a gambler. I do love the sport of kings. I love the athleticism of it and I love the breeding and making that. Then that's my involvement in the racing part of it. I would love to see it come back. Aksarben was really unique because it was in the middle of the country and they could never figure out why we had 30,000 people on a weekend and 15,000 people aren't...but it's the only good gambling to me. I have a farm right off the highway in Wisner and I would employ kids from high school and work them hard. (Laugh) We would have

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a barn and I had the horses there and they had to learn how to do stalls and things like that, but it has been hard to me to justify that financially. And so instead they sell it to a dollar store so they can work now at the dollar store instead of cleaning stalls, or whatever, which really breaks my heart to see that we replace, especially in the rural Nebraska, the advantages of those horses and the love that you get and not about gambling, and it's only the kind of gambling that really contributes more to the lifestyle than it does... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Thank you for your willingness to serve. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you, Senator Krist. Our love of horse racing is something Senator Krist and I can always agree on. Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Chairman Larson, and I do want to welcome you as you are a District 16 constituent, and I'm aware of your passion for horse racing and the industry and I, too, enjoy horse racing. I was a former marketing director at the State Fair and during that time there was the national decline. Car races used to be a huge part of our state's history, too, where the National Guard came to their park here and they would help get cars going. And it does seem that the marketing efforts continue nationally to help horse racing and be enthusiasm. And aside from gambling, because you're not a gambler, are there other educational ways that there's outreach that you believe...or is just the Racing Commission, the Racing Commission and maybe the Department of Agriculture. I'm also Ag Chair now that we can help promote some of the history more than the entertainment piece to it. [CONFIRMATION]

HELEN ABBOTT FELLER: Well, you know, it's funded by purses and it's expensive sport. That's why it's called the sport of kings. So to be able to afford such expense to get a horse to the track, you have to have large purses. And to create those large purses, you need to have the handle. So regardless of whether I'm a gambler or not a gambler, we need those gamblers. And they've been back way before even the Bible, they loved those horses and betting on those horses. So I don't think it's a sin that we're not going to probably, you know, get past. And I hate to see that Nebraska have...not have, you know, had the foresight to maybe protect that. But it's really the only way to fund those kind of purses. I don't know, you know, it's just how that sport works. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. And thank you for your willingness to continue your service and make the journey to Lincoln today. I have no other questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: Thank you, Ms. Feller. Are there any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your time today. Do I have any supporters? Opponents?

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Neutral? That will close the hearing on Ms. Feller and end our General Affairs hearing for the day. I'll have a quick Exec Session to review these appointments and then we'll move on.