

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee September 14, 2021

BREWER: Good morning and welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm Senator Tom Brewer from Gordon, Nebraska, and represent the 43rd Legislative District, and I serve as Chair of this committee. The committee will take up items posted on the agenda. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your opinion on proposed legislation before us. Of course, today is a hearing. The committee members might come and go as needed during the hearing. Position letters can be included in the official record, but must be submitted to the clerk prior to 1200 hours Central Standard Time the day prior to the scheduled hearing. You must also indicate in your testimony that you would like it to be included in the official record. Unless you testify in person before the committee, your name will not be included in the committee statement. Each letter must be-- must include the following: your name, address, bill number, and we will not include any mass mailings. Ask that you abide by the following procedures to better facilitate today's hearing. First off, masks are optional to you. It does help so that the testimony can be heard if you unmask for your testimony. If you're planning to testify today, please pick up one of the green sign-in sheets. So that would include everyone who is an appointee today. They're at the back of the room. Please fill them out and print clearly so we can read your writing and then either have a page or drop the green sheet off to the committee clerk. If you have any handouts, we'd ask that you make 12 copies and give them to the page when you come up. If you don't have 12 copies, we will attempt to get copies made. Please move to the reserve chair when it's your turn to testify, and we will go ahead and just use the order that everyone's in here. So Jeff Davis will be up first from the Accountability and Disclosure Office. Let's see, we're using a light system. Actually, we won't use a light system today with the, the appointees we have unless you get really long-winded, you should be just fine. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name and then spell your name, first and last to ensure it's accurately in the record. No displays of opposition or support for bills or individuals will be allowed in this public hearing. We have our committee members here with us today who will introduce themselves starting on my right with Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Good morning. Senator Carol Blood representing District 3.

McCOLLISTER: John McCollister, District 20, central Omaha.

SANDERS: Rita Sanders, District 45, the Bellevue Offutt community.

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M. HANSEN: Matt Hansen, District 26 in northeast Lincoln.

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37.

HALLORAN: Steve Halloran, District 33, Adams and parts of Hall County.

BREWER: And Matt Hansen is my Vice Chair. On my right is Dick Clark, my legal counsel. On the left on the corner is Julie Condon, our committee clerk. And our page today is Kate-- is it Kissane?

KATE KISSANE: Kissane, yeah.

BREWER: She is a senior at UNL and she is from Chicago, Illinois. OK, with that said, we will go ahead and kick things off. Our first appointee-- appointment today is Jeff Davis, if you want to come on up. Good morning and welcome to the Government Committee.

JEFFERY DAVIS: Good morning, Senators. My name is Jeffery, spelled J-e-f-f-e-r-y, Davis, D-a-v-i-s. I hope, Senator Brewer, that you don't have to use the light system. I am a lawyer, when you put a lawyer in front of a microphone, sometimes we, we get a bit long-winded, but I'll do my best to, to keep it short.

BREWER: I have one on my left and my right, so you're safe.

JEFFERY DAVIS: I am a, I am a lawyer. I live in Beatrice, Nebraska. I've lived there since 2009. I was appointed by Governor Ricketts to serve on the Accountability and Disclosure Commission in 2016. I filled-- I was appointed to fill the unexpired portion of a term of another individual who had resigned from the commission, which renders me eligible for reappointment at this point. So I am familiar with the workings of the commission. From July of 2018 until July of 2020, I served as vice chair of the commission. From July of 2020 to the present day I've been serving as chair of, of the commission. Just a little bit of background. As I said, I'm, I'm a lawyer. I mostly practice in the transactional area. I do a lot of estate planning, probate sort of thing. I have in the community of Beatrice have served off and on on a number of nonprofit boards. I'm the past chair of the Beatrice Area Chamber of Commerce, past president of our local chapter of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, past chair of Gage County United Way, and, and a few other of things like that. My wife Brenda is a assistant professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film, she teaches scenic design. We have three daughters, they're in seventh grade, sixth grade, and first grade, currently. I attended college and law school at Loyola University Chicago. So I have something in common with, with your page

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there. But we've made-- my wife and I've made Nebraska home for our-- for the past 12 years. I've been honored to be able to serve on the commission. I believe strongly in the work that the commission does. I believe that allowing voters to be able to have access to valid information will allow them to make the best decisions in our republican form of government. I would really appreciate your consideration and would enjoy serving another full term on the commission to continue the work that we've begun and I'm happy to answer any questions that anybody has.

BREWER: All right. Thank you for that. I guess I got one real quick for you. Other than the fact that we, we sometimes-- I don't want to say dread, but don't necessarily always look forward to letters from the, from the Accountability and Disclosure Office. How much time does that take away from, you know, your, your normal routine? Is it a, a monthly, weekly? How often are you actually tasked to, to come in and do reviews or--

JEFFERY DAVIS: The commission meets eight times a year, generally. Our meetings usually last a couple of hours. We have-- we are fortunate as a commission to have a great staff led by Frank Daley here and assisted by his, his deputies and his general counsel, who handle the day-to-day work with very, you know, I think with great aplomb. I don't think that people should dread getting letters from the commission in general, because really my experience with the commission has been that we're not a gotcha group. The commission really is trying to help people understand the rules and help people comply with the rules and help people to understand why the rules are there. From a little bit of experience I have, I don't think that's true across the country. I think we're, we're fortunate in Nebraska to have a commission that, that really seeks to enforce the spirit of the law and help people come into compliance rather than-- we're not looking to punish people, in other words. Sometimes that has to happen. You know, sometimes fines have to be assessed when, when people do things that are just blatantly against the rules. But in terms of how much time it takes for us as commissioners, we have the meeting time. We spend-- I can't speak for the other commissioners, I spend, you know, an hour or an hour or so reviewing the materials prior to each meeting. It's not something that takes a giant chunk of time out of my day-to-day life and my, my, my career and my family. But I'm happy to put the time in that, that it does take.

BREWER: Well, no, and that's, that's exactly what I was wondering just how much impact that has on the rest of your life and what you do and all. And, and just for the record, the, the secret with, with Frank is

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that if you ask first before you do it, usually it works out pretty well. It's when you don't ask, and then you have to go with hat in hand and say, hey. So I, I appreciate that.

JEFFERY DAVIS: I think that's true, Senator.

BREWER: All right. Questions? Yes, Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't remember, are commission members subject to term limits?

JEFFERY DAVIS: Yes, commission members are generally only allowed one term, a six-year term. The exception to that is if you were appointed to fill an unexpired term, you can fill an-- you can serve another full term, which is why, why I'm here today, since I only filled the unexpired term of another individual.

McCOLLISTER: And this is an unpaid position, correct?

JEFFERY DAVIS: I do get reimbursed for my mileage. But other than that, yes, it is an unpaid position.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BREWER: Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. And thank you for coming out today. And I agree with everything you said about the NADC. I tell all new candidates that they are just trying to help you understand the rules and good for them. Hey, I, I-- and I had hoped to get in touch with you sooner when you just said that, but can you back up to what you just said about what form of government? I, I, I wasn't sure what you had said.

JEFFERY DAVIS: Oh, in our, in our Republican form of government, meaning a republic democracy,--

BLOOD: All right.

JEFFERY DAVIS: --whichever term you, you want to use. I wasn't referring to a political party, I was referring to a governmental system.

BLOOD: No, I was like a little confused by that. So thank you for that clarification.

JEFFERY DAVIS: Absolutely.

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BREWER: OK, any additional questions? All right, seeing none, thank you.

JEFFERY DAVIS: Thank you, Senators.

BREWER: All right. And that is the only one that we have today as far as employment from the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission. So now we will transition into the Nebraska Tourism Commission. And John, you're up first. Welcome to the Government Committee.

JOHN CHAPO: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Thank you very much. Hi, I'm John Chapo, J-o-h-n, last name Chapo, C-h-a-p-o. I'm president and CEO of Lincoln Children's Zoo here in Lincoln, Nebraska. I came here 35 years ago for a couple, three years to work in Nebraska and then get the heck out of Nebraska because who wants to stay here. Well, I came from Indiana and fell in love with the zoo, Lincoln, Nebraska, fell in love, have raised, raised, raised three great Huskers, two university graduates, three Lincoln High graduates, very proud of my sons who are 27, 28, and 29 now. Like I said, I've been at the Lincoln Children's Zoo for 35 years as the president and CEO. I came here from the Potawatomi Zoo in South Bend, Indiana, where I ran that zoo after working there for ten years. Yes, I'm getting old. I'm 64 years old, but I'm really good at what I do. I enjoy Nebraska very much. I've enjoyed serving on the Tourism Commission very, very much. Governor Heineman first appointed me to the commission. Governor Ricketts then-- Governor Ricketts has been reappointing me. I have been fortunate enough to serve as the chair or chair-elect, treasurer of the Nebraska Tourism Commission. I've seen a lot of growth and a lot of evolution of the commission over the years. We're making progress regarding profile, people coming to our great state of Nebraska. I very much enjoy and appreciate the, the entire state. We love having meetings. We spread them out across the state. Just last month we were in Scottsbluff holding our meeting. Next month we're in, we're-- in October, we're in Grand Island holding our meeting during the Tourism Commission annual conference. So we have a great state here. The Lincoln Children's Zoo is a private nonprofit zoo receiving no tax dollars of operation for support. We did last year, though, receive some, some CARES Act funds to help us because of the COVID impact, because we are 100 percent-- we are 85 percent earned revenue and 15 percent contributor revenue to operate the zoo. Again, we don't get city or county tax in any way to operate. So we're-- we have a sharp pencil, run a great business. And I'm very proud of the success Lincoln Children's Zoo has had and accomplishes being a significant

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tourism attraction in the state of Nebraska. When are you going to Africa?

BREWER: We depart on 9 November.

JOHN CHAPO: OK. Safe travels.

BREWER: Well, let's see, quick, quick couple of questions for you. I think we're going to have a change in the leadership at Nebraska Game and Parks. I think Jim Douglas is planning to, to retire. One of the things that I, I probably am going to ask others is, I sometimes think that we've lost opportunities with all of the facilities across the state that Game and Parks manages to not somehow build on those in a way so that we almost have Nebraska as a, as a destination place for certain places. Say, say-- well, Fort Robinson might be an example. But to do that, we kind of have to step up our game a little bit, maybe, maybe it'd be the, the living facilities out there for guests that might come, things like that. Is there a lot of interaction between the, the Tourism and the Game and Parks?

JOHN CHAPO: Oh, absolutely. Roger Kuhn, who is a significant leader at the Game and Parks Commission has been a-- he's just the immediate past chair of tourism. So Roger attends all the meetings, is very, very participatory. So he helps integrate and I've served with Roger for many years on the Tourism Commission. He's a great representative for the Game and Parks Commission. Knows it well, obviously. And there is, there is good integration. I really, really believe that. You are quite correct, they are a significant asset, a major asset in our great state, especially people come to our state because of the outdoors. We are a great state regarding the skies, the fresh water, the open air hunting. You know, we-- and we've been safe, our tourism has increased a lot because we're more spread out in Nebraska so because of the, the pandemics, we've seen a surge of people coming to Nebraska. To answer your question briefly, yes, there's been very good, I feel, strong collaboration with the Tourism Commission and the Game and Parks Commission.

BREWER: Well, I'm going to share this with you because I had about a four-day, nonstop conversation with Senator Wayne and he's of the mindset that Game and Parks is unique in that they pretty much are self-sustaining and that the, the income they receive is what they have to use. But that maybe at some point there needs to be a look at an infusion of funds to help them bring up the facilities so that then they're used more, they're more desirable and that we draw more people here. But because of their limitations now, without that infusion,

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they're kind of caught in this cycle of what they have is what they have. And it's hard to really step it up to, to be at a level of some of the other states, you know, like a, a South Dakota who, who has made tourism, you know, kind of the lifeblood for the state. And so I, I think this year, what you're going to see is he's going to come with legislation to, to give that direct infusion of resources to them so that they can stand up better facilities around the state and possibly have that cycle start to where we draw bigger and bigger numbers. Just your general feeling on that?

JOHN CHAPO: I think it's a very good idea. I mean, Nebraska needs to build its infrastructure of tourism attractions. We've always believed that on the commission building the infrastructure, enhancing the destinations, building additional destinations to increase the number of visitors coming to our great state. Absolutely, we need to invest in the infrastructure. Absolutely, Senator. You know, I, I wish that the Tourism Commission had funds to help that. But then you know well that we receive hotel/motel tax that, that funds our roughly 6 or 7 million dollar a year budget. We do do grants out to many-- not many destinations across Nebraska so we work aggressive with marketing grants and things like that for-- and we try to work in all corners of the state of Nebraska. But I, I think an infusion of capital to help improve, improve the, the destinations and the infrastructure in our tourism, absolutely, Senator. It's a good-- I think it's a wise investment. There's a good return on that investment, Senator.

BREWER: And, and I think his thought is that if we make it so it's desirable and, and that people want to come back and you're able to draw in new, that's a cycle that continues that, that, you know, they, they share that information with others. And then pretty soon others want to come and see it. And you're almost self-promoting without having to spend as much resources trying to promote whatever it is, you know, in the way of a facility that you're showing off.

JOHN CHAPO: It, it [INAUDIBLE]. You know, Nebraska grew the Passport Program that gets Nebraskans out and, and around the state very well. And so many Nebraskans go, oh, I didn't know. It's, it's amazing how many Nebraskans, eastern Nebraskans don't go to western Nebraska. They don't know where Gordon is. OK? They've never been on Highway 20 or, you know, taken the beautiful scenic Highway 2 out to-- through the Sandhills. And so that's the beauty of the Passport Program to educate the Nebraskans. So as they bring their guests-- like I had, I had family in from New Jersey this year and we went out to Mullen. We went out tanking with Mitch Glidden. And, you know, we've, we've taken people out to see the Sandhill Cranes. So we bring an influx. So it's

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that knowledge and getting that information out. Absolutely. And improving the destinations, yes, sir. We-- or the Lincoln Children's Zoo have learned ourselves. We've had a huge investment in private funding into the zoo to, to build it as an increased destination. And the numbers speak for themselves regarding the increase in attendance and in revenue and economic development.

BREWER: Well, no, hats off there. I have been to more Boo at the Zoo than I care to remember, but--

JOHN CHAPO: Appreciate that.

BREWER: --it was all well done. And other than being a father that needed patience, I was, I was good to go with all of it, but.

JOHN CHAPO: Thank you, Senator.

BREWER: All right, other questions? All right. Well, thank you.

JOHN CHAPO: Thank you, Senators.

BREWER: All right, next appointment, Ashley.

ASHLEY OLSON: Good morning, everyone.

BREWER: Good morning. Welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

ASHLEY OLSON: Thank you. I'm Ashley Olson. My name is spelled A-s-h-l-e-y O-l-s-o-n. I have recently completed a four-year term on the Nebraska Tourism Commission, was appointed by Governor Ricketts when the Tourism Commission expanded their representation across the state. I represent Franklin, Webster, Nuckolls, Adams, and Hamilton Counties in south central Nebraska. My educational background is in business and economics. And for the last 13 years, I've been with the Willa Cather Foundation. Most recently, the last five years as their executive director. We're a museum and a collection of historic sites in south central Nebraska that welcome on average about 40-- visitors from about 40 states and 5 countries on an annual basis, pre-COVID, of course. At the Tourism Commission, we have done a lot of work in recent years to develop a new strategic plan, which I'm excited, if reappointed, to stick around and start working on the implementation of. I personally am really passionate about how rural communities like the town of Red Cloud can utilize the assets they have to promote tourism and grow their economies and support jobs. At the local level, I've been involved in our chamber of commerce as a past treasurer of

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that organization, the past chair of our local community fund, which is an affiliated fund of the Nebraska Community Foundation and have also been involved in volunteer efforts with other nonprofit organizations like local Child Development Center and other causes in Red Cloud. Happy to answer any questions that you have.

BREWER: All right, thank you, Ashley. All right, questions for Ashley? Well, I got to just run one by you since you, you were here for the first line of questionings. Does-- what I'm trying to get across in the way of, of what Senator Wayne's thinking makes sense in that we're kind of in a limited cycle if Game and Parks only has X amount to work with. They, they could upgrade their facilities to within that limit. But I think what he's thinking about is, is fiber optics going in and refitting buildings and facilities so that they're, they're world class. So if you want to bring people in for a, a major conference somewhere, whether it'd be Ponca State Park or something like that, you would have a place that would be able to keep up with the times and be able to be kind of a, a showplace. But you can't do that if that's-- that budget that you have is so limited that it's really you're just kind of the little Dutch boy sticking your finger in the dike getting by. I mean, we, we have nice facilities, but we don't have great facilities in many cases. We have land. We have places that could be great. We just haven't been able to take that leap to become a place that everybody talks about wanting to come and be a destination for vacation.

ASHLEY OLSON: Absolutely. I think there's so much we can build on from an infrastructure perspective in Nebraska. I think there's just a lot of untapped potential. One of the current goals of our new strategic plan is to focus on authenticity. So what makes Nebraska really unique? What is it about this place that people come and want to experience? And as Commissioner Chapo mentioned, it's, it's the outdoor experiences and the wide open places that make Nebraska a special place to a lot of people. So I think any way to build additional infrastructure statewide is a great investment. I experienced a similar conundrum several years ago professionally at the Willa Cather Foundation. We have six sites that were owned at the time by the State Historical Society, and they were experiencing, you know, like the Game and Parks, they own a lot of property statewide that has the potential that, you know, a lot of it needed improvements, infrastructure improvements just to keep up with the times. But they, too, didn't have the budget on a regular basis to make those investments. And that situation actually played out with them gifting properties back to us. And as a nonprofit organization, we were involved in some fundraising efforts to make those

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improvements. Probably not going to work in the case of Game and Parks, but I would very much like to see infrastructure improvements and investments in building attractions made statewide. That's something we've talked a bit about at the commission. But right now, because we're funding-- we're funded by the lodging tax, we primarily invest in marketing efforts.

BREWER: Well, one of the things I'll probably try and figure out is if we take your strategic plan and we overlay Game and Parks' strategic plan, if there's kind of a cross pollination of ideas and efforts in places or whether they're kind of separate islands that are, you know, working to do whatever particular thing they see as the priority. But I don't know, I just, I, I just think the two are close enough in what they're trying to do that merging the ideas into a, a bigger strategic plan might be the answer to, to get us where we need to be. Plus, I think on the part of the, the legislators if we need to find resources, the idea that the two of them are working together would give them more peace of mind that we're, we're going to be where we need to be.

ASHLEY OLSON: Absolutely. I think we would all look forward to that collaboration and those discussions.

BREWER: All right. Well, thank you.

ASHLEY OLSON: Thank you.

BREWER: Any other questions? All right. Thanks for coming in. All right, our next will be Darrin. There you are. Welcome to the Government Committee.

DARRIN BARNER: Morning. Thank you. Darrin Barner, D-a-r-r-i-n, last name's Barner, B as in boy, B-a-r-n-e-r. I live in Laurel, Nebraska, work in Wayne in District 5. I was appointed by Governor Ricketts. And my occupation, I work for Heritage Homes in Wayne, Nebraska. Born in Wayne also and I also coach at Wayne State College. My background in tourism, little unique. Back in the 1990s, I worked for Northwest Airlines and I have 5,000 flights under my belt. I'm not a pilot but I was a part of their charter division where people would charter airplane flights to Hawaii, Cancun, Las Vegas, and things like that. So the tourism marketing thing was kind of catchy with me. Enjoyed it. I was laid off after 9/11, 13 months after that, and that brought me back home, back up to Wayne and start with Heritage Homes.

BREWER: And you grew up where you are now?

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DARRIN BARNER: Wayne, Nebraska. Yep.

BREWER: Very good. All right. Questions? Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. I'm curious, can you address a little bit about how well Nebraska tourism helped save the Wayne Chicken Show?

DARRIN BARNER: Yes, you know, northeast Nebraska, where I'm from, not a lot of population.

BLOOD: Right.

DARRIN BARNER: Ponca State Park is kind of a big staple up that way. Chicken Show is a little bit crazy because 10,000 people go up there and it was a one-day event and now it's basically three. But yes, there's grants and, and, and things, I think, can be applied for by the, the chamber in the, the Wayne city to promote that. With our location in northeast Nebraska next year, the state tourism convention will be in South Sioux. I will say this, the media that we get on the other side of the river at Sioux City, Iowa, from ABC, CBS, Fox, and NBC, they get a ton of press over that way. And, you know, as we all know with, with tourism, anybody that crosses the state into ours is a good thing. I also will have next-- well, this May coming up, but Wayne will host the United States Nationals Girls High School Rugby Championships, and Hawaii will be sending a team to here so. I don't know many teams from Hawaii ever been in Nebraska, but I can rest assured, my whole goal is not only to put on a good event, a great event and get it back, because I want that thing to stay here.

BLOOD: So for clarification, the answer to the question, though, is that the Tourism Department has played an important role--

DARRIN BARNER: Yes.

BLOOD: --in events like the Wayne Chicken Show?

DARRIN BARNER: Absolutely.

BLOOD: Thank you.

BREWER: Other questions? Yes, Senator Lowe.

LOWE: I've been wanting to ask this of your two other predecessors, but what would you say are the best tourism things that Nebraska has to offer? Maybe like the top five or something like that.

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DARRIN BARNER: One is the, the cranes, you know, that's getting to be where, you know, you have people from other countries that are coming here. You have the entertainment value of Omaha, you have the Haymarket in Lincoln. Now I can say this, catchy thing with my job at Heritage Homes we deliver custom modular homes to 11 states and when COVID started coming in people were leaving the East Coast and the West Coast going to Montana and Wyoming because they could work remotely. And it's amazing how many phone calls we got because when people went out there they're like, we don't have to move back to California or New York. So we're actually getting a lot of phone calls from those areas for people that are going to move there. So like John mentioned before, you know, we're very unique because of the Omaha, Lincoln area, but also the seclusion a little bit of western Nebraska and the Sandhills and northeast Nebraska, where we're getting people that are going out there and liking what they're seeing and changing their life and moving and coming here. And so, you know, the, the western Panhandle Nebraska, you know, once some people go out there, they bring a friend next time. And that's part of our strategic plan, too, is you need to get people here the first time to have and come back a second time with more, more folks.

BREWER: Additional questions? Well, I guess I'll, I'll share a quick one since it was from this weekend. In Gordon, we have what's called a Willow Tree Festival, and it's the same as most of your small town events, but it brings in a lot of vendors and they did something different the last couple of years. And they notified the veterans home in Hot Springs, South Dakota, and, and in Scottsbluff. They brought their busses with those who could come in and, and see the facilities. But they also got a hold of the, the senior care facilities in Chadron, Hay Springs, Rushville, Valentine, and, and they, too, in some cases only brought two or three. But by the time you bring them all together, you have, you know, another 100 and some people there. And for the vendors, that's, that's huge because they come a long ways and sometimes the ability to sell enough wares to at least pay for the gas and a little bit is the secret to being able to keep going. You know, there's-- and they were chastised at first over the idea that someone would even bring a bus from Hot Springs, South Dakota, all the way down. But they incorporated some live music and a, a free dinner and some things like that. And it doesn't take long little things and we got the whole Nebraska nice factor. And, and, you know, once they come and they're sold on it, it's pretty hard to keep them from not coming back. So, you know, the, the more you look at the ones that think out of the box, the more you realize that that's probably the secret to actually having success. All right, thank you.

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DARRIN BARNER: Appreciate it. Thanks, everybody.

BREWER: All right. And our final appointee, Barry McFarland.

BARRY McFARLAND: Good morning.

BREWER: Good morning. Welcome to the Government Committee.

BARRY McFARLAND: Thank you very much. I'm Barry McFarland, B-a-r-r-y M-c-F-a-r-l-a-n-d. I am one of the owners of Mac's Creek Winery and Brewery. I was appointed by Governor Ricketts. I represent District 10, which is southwest Nebraska, Lexington, Ogallala, McCook, Imperial, those communities down there. That is my after school hours. During my real job, I am the principal of 320 of the smartest, cutest 8 and 9 year olds in the state of Nebraska at Sandoz Elementary. And so I, I have been born and raised in Lexington and absolutely love it there and love what I do. And so it's a pleasure to serve. So thank you.

BREWER: All right. Tell me a little more about the winery.

BARRY McFARLAND: It's good. We just finished picking, we just finished, finished picking grapes on Sunday. So life is really good right now, so.

BREWER: OK, so you grow the grapes right there?

BARRY McFARLAND: Yes, sir, we do.

BREWER: And you bottle everything right there?

BARRY McFARLAND: Yes, sir, we do. My brother-- my brother's the winemaker brewmaster.

BREWER: And, and when did it, when did it start? How far in the--

BARRY McFARLAND: We are, we are about to turn 20 years old. My parents started it in the spring of 1999. We got rid of them finally. [LAUGHTER] And so my brother and I have taken-- no, they, they have retired since then. And my brother and I-- I do the business side of it, all the finance side. Science, biology, chemistry, that didn't really interest me but he can't manage a checkbook so I take care of the finances. He makes the wine and, and life goes on, so. But yeah, we, we produce about 100,000 bottles annually at the winery.

BREWER: That was my next question.

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BARRY McFARLAND: We're the second largest winery in the state of Nebraska. We distribute to 285 stores across the state and sell it all through Lexington there, so.

BREWER: I, I used to before I got burdened with other jobs in Lincoln, go to, to Germany every year and did a, a wine tour with a group of German officers and learned a lot about the wine business. Do you guys do tours of your facility there?

BARRY McFARLAND: Yeah, we have a full, full service. We're open every single day and we do tours. We have a, we have a hiking trail, a sustainability hiking trail. One of the things we're quite proud of is we don't spray any pesticides or anything like that on any of our grapes. And so we give people the opportunity to do tastings. And Spring Creek runs right through the middle of the property. So we have fire pits that line the property. We have events, live music. We are a full-service operation.

BREWER: All right, well, very nice. OK, quick questions? Yes, Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Just letting you know I just texted your father and told him you said that.

BARRY McFARLAND: Thank you. I appreciate that.

BREWER: Thanks, John, appreciate that. All right, any other questions? Well, thanks for enlightening-- enlightening us. Now the, the Germans were very, very good hosts. Normally, they would have meat and cheese treats with the wine.

BARRY McFARLAND: Absolutely.

BREWER: You do that too?

BARRY McFARLAND: We have a full, we have a full appetizer menu that also goes along with it.

BREWER: All right, well, you met the standard there.

BARRY McFARLAND: And we're a great, we're a great spot between Lincoln and Gordon for you to stop. So that'll work out.

BREWER: OK, man after my heart. All righty, well, thank you for your testimony.

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BARRY McFARLAND: Thank you very much. Have a great day.

BREWER: OK, that concludes our appointee interviews here today. Well, we'll-- let's see, help me out, Julie. The plan to Exec would be? Right away. All right, so if we could clear the room, we will go ahead and Exec.