

LINEHAN: Good afternoon. Welcome to the Redistricting Committee public hearing. My name is Lou Ann Linehan. I'm from Elkhorn and I represent Legislative District 39. I serve as Chair of this committee. Today we will hear all eight bills at the same time. That way, if you'd like to testify on more than one map, you may do so all at the same time. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your position on the proposed legislation before us today. To better facilitate today's proceedings, I ask that you follow-- abide by the following procedures. Please turn off cell phones. The order of testimony is introducer, members of the public, and closing remarks. So I will introduce bills and so will the Vice Chairman Wayne. If you will be testifying, please complete the green form and hand-- hand the form to the page when you come up to testify, though I don't-- sure we have pages today, so they'll be handing them to LaMont. Thank you. If you have written materials that you would like to distribute to the committee, please hand them to LaMont to distribute. We need 12 copies for all the committee members and staff. When you begin to testify, please state and spell your name for the record. Please be concise. It is my request that you limit your testimony to three minutes. And we will use the light system, so you'll have two minutes on green, then one minute on yellow, and then it will be red and you need to wrap up. If your remarks are reflected in previous testimony or you would like your position to be known but you do not wish to testify, please sign the white form in the back of the room and it will be included in the official record. So where is the white form in the back of the room? Somebody hold their hand up.

WAYNE: It's in the front, in the front of the room.

LINEHAN: It's in the front of the room. It's right here. OK, so LaMont can tell you where to sign up. OK. I would like to introduce committee staff. I know Research-- Legislative Research Director Ben Thompson is here, there, and his staff, LaMont Rainey, right there, and Tim Erickson is right here. Also, he will be here shortly, is-- and he will be at that end of the table-- is committee clerk, Grant Latimer. I would like the committee members, beginning at my far right, to introduce themselves.

BRIESE: Tom Briese, District 41.

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37.

GEIST: Suzanne Geist, District 25, which is the east side of Lincoln and Lancaster County.

LATHROP: Steve Lathrop, District 12, which is Ralston and parts of southwest Omaha.

WAYNE: Justin Wayne, District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County.

BREWER: Tom Brewer, District 43, which is most of western Nebraska.

BLOOD: Good afternoon. Senator Carol Blood, representing western Bellevue and southeastern Papillion, Nebraska.

LINEHAN: Please refrain from applause or oth-- other indications of support or opposition. I'd like to remind the committee members to speak directly into the microphones. For our audience, the microphones in the room are not for amplification but for recording purposes. Last, we are an electronic-equipped committee. Information is provided electronically as well as in paper form; therefore, you may see committee members reference information on their electronic devices. Be assured that your presence here today and your testimony are important to us as critical to our state government. I also would like to say something about letters for the records. We know, unfortunately, that over the weekend the redistricting public letter email was down. This morning at the Capitol, all elec-- we had no phones or computers. But we think these things are all fixed now. It was due to technical issues. According to the Legislature's rules, public letters need to be-- include a bill number, and we didn't have bill numbers until yesterday. But even though, we're going to waive those rules, so any letters that were sent in over the weekend, staff worked through to sort through hundreds of emails to make sure the letters without bill numbers would still be counted for today's hearing. In addition, you still have until noon tomorrow-- this is not for the people here but for everyone-- September 15, to submit a letter to be included in the public record on one of the eight bills we are hearing today. If you're not sure your email was sent through over the weekend or if you sent your letter to another senator's email address, please resubmit your letter to redpl@leg.ne.gov-- excuse me, @leg.ne.gov. I am here to introduce-- so now, since I introduce the first bill, I am going to turn the Chair of the committee over to the Vice Chair, Justin Wayne. So do you want me to do all of these and then you do your two or you want to go back and forth?

WAYNE: We can do [INAUDIBLE] I mean, it's just going to be us reading for a while.

LINEHAN: I'm not going to be very long.

WAYNE: OK. We will start with Senator Linehan's bills. And to keep this-- I'll-- she'll introduce all the bills and then I'll introduce both of the ones that I'm going to talk about, and then we'll open it-- open it up for everybody. Senator Linehan.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Vice Chairman Wayne. I'm here to introduce LB1, LB3, LB5, LB6, LB7, and LB8. First, I would like everyone to recognize this is a difficult process. No one likes change, but due to population shifts, changes are necessary. No map presented today will win the approval of all, but today is the public's opportunity to weigh in and we welcome your input. LB1 ensures minority voices are protected, both black minority majority and Hispanic minority majority legislative districts remain in legi-- in Congressional District 2. LB1 follows clearly recognizable boundaries. It is necessary to split counties to ensure-- in the congressional districts to ensure we keep the one-person-one-vote principle and to keep the deviation at zero between the three legislative districts. LB3 is a leg-- is a legislative redistricting map which creates a new district in Sarpy County. We have three legislative districts which are heavily overpopulated. Thirty-three legislative districts are underpopulated. Legislative District 39, 10, and 49, which are in Douglas and Sarpy County, have a combined 40,000 voters too many that need to be moved to a new district. We merged 20-- we merged Legislative District 23 and 24, which puts 24 into Sarpy County. The smallest changes are in Kearney and Grand Island because we were able to keep those cities whole. LB5 is the Public Service Commission map. LB6 is the Supreme Court district map. LB7 is the state school board map. There are members on the committee who have issues with the state school board map, and we're here today to hear from the public on how we could address those issues. LB8 is the University of Nebraska's Board of Regents map, which also people have voiced concern. So, again, we welcome the public's input this afternoon. Thank you. Now Senator Wayne will introduce LB2 and LB4. And just a matter of housekeeping here, we're going to wipe down the witnesses' tables between each testifier. So after Senator Wayne finishes, somebody can already be sitting over here. Is that right, Tim?

WAYNE: OK. Well, Senator Linehan, that was a lot shorter than mine, so--

LINEHAN: We'll remember that tonight. [LAUGHTER]

WAYNE: Good morning. Good morning. Chairwoman Linehan and members of the Redistricting Committee. My name is Justin Wayne, J-u-s-t-i-n W-a-y-n-e, and I represent Legislative District 13, which is north Omaha and northeast Douglas County. LB2 would adopt a proposed redistricting plan for Nebraska's three congressional districts that I put forward after input and feedback from many of our colleagues and constituents. See, I just skipped some parts. The result of the 2020 Census revealed that Nebraska's population has continually continued to shift heavily from the west to the east, resulting in a shift of nearly 100,000 people between the three congressional districts. CD1 slightly grew, just under 6,000 people over the ideal district population. CD2 grew significantly, to more than 47,000 people over the ideal district population. CD3 lost population, falling more than 53,000 under the ideal population. Douglas County, the largest county by population in the state of Nebraska, has been wholly included in the single congressional district for Ne-- for as long as Nebraska has been a state. I want to repeat that. Douglas County has been wholly included for as long as Nebraska has been a state. When we were first admitted into 1867 and until 1882, the state had a single congressional district for the entire state. Starting in 1882, Nebraska had three congressional districts in which Douglas County was placed entirely in the 1st Congressional District. Fast-forwarding to 1932, 1942, and again in 1962, throughout the entire time, Douglas County has remained and it's entirely in Congressional District 2. All of Douglas County has been in Congressional District 2 since 1892 and in-- in a single congressional district, either at-large CD1 or CD2, the entire time Nebraska has been a state. Obviously my proposed plan would not split Douglas County because I believe there is no logical, justifiable reason to split the county, being that Douglas County is the core of Congressional District 2 for over 130 years. Among the redistricting criteria that we adopted when looking at preserving the core and preserving the community of interest, we looked at Sarpy County, as a committee and also as an individual myself, and we studied-- we looked at the city of Bellevue. The city of Bellevue at most has the most common with the city of Omaha and Douglas County, followed closely by the city of La Vista, which, like Bellevue, also borders the city of Omaha. Until 2011, the congressional district included mo-- most of the eastern half of Sarpy County, including all of the city of Bellevue and all of the city of La Vista, roughly half of the city of Papillion. During the 2011 redistricting, the Legislature opted to radically alter CD2 by moving Bellevue into Congressional District 1, while the western Sarpy County shifted to CD-- Congressional District 2. Under my proposed plan, much of the city of Bellevue would be restored to Congressional District 2, from Fort

Crook Road to Fontenelle Forest in the east-- and east of Highway 30 on the south. The plan would also retain much of the city of La Vista in the Congressional District 2 east of 96th Street. In order to create a compact and contiguous boundary and to ensure that we didn't draw incumbents out of their current district, my plan also retains parts of city of Papillion in District 2, which is east of 84th Street, mostly north of Highway 370. As for the other boundaries, the 1st and 3rd Congressional Districts in my proposed plan would shift all of Platte and Polk Counties from the 3rd District to the 1st, along with most of Otoe County. The plan splits exactly two counties, Otoe and Sarpy, in order to achieve the number of constituents in each district. Congressional districts adopted by the Legislature must achieve absolute equality between the districts in order for them to pass constitutional muster or a court challenge. In comparison to Senator Linehan's plan, 61 people, even a small deviation, could raise scrutiny. While I think many differences-- many different reasonable congressional plans can be drawn, I am certainly open to the idea, to other potential ways to draw the congressional districts. But the fact remains that Douglas County is the core and should be-- remain whole throughout this congressional district. And again, this is back since we were admitted as a state. Any map that splits Douglas County would be a gross violation, in my opinion, of LR134 redistricting plans adopted by this committee and our Legislature. Senator Linehan and I have had many conversations and I understand the reasoning and the logic behind it. However, looking at the history of CD2, I have to agree with Senator Hein-- I mean Governor Heineman, and I had to laugh about that because I don't agree with Governor Heineman on a lot. The result would drastically change the core of CD2, and that is why I would hope that this committee would push forward LB2 in this matter. Now turning to LB4, yes, I am still Justin Wayne, and I talked about the population shift, but I want to talk specifically about the legislative districts now. In 2010-- since 2010, four districts in western Nebraska suffered the most population loss: LD4-- 47, Senator Erdman, lost 15.5 percent; LD42, Senator Groene, lost 13.4 percent; LD44, Senator Hughes, lost 13.3 percent; LD43, Senator Brewer, lost 11.7 percent. Meanwhile, three districts with the most growth overall in western Douglas and-- were western Douglas and Sarpy County. Senator Linehan's district grew by 48-- Sen-- and that's District 39-- grew by 48.7 percent. Senator Day, which is LD49, gained 31.1 percent. LD10, which is Senator DeBoer, gained 30.7 percent. In light of these changes, and to ensure that we are following the established redistricting guidelines for the entire state, not just parts of the state, it is necessary to move one legislative district to the areas with the most growth. My plan does just that, moving LD44 from

southwest Nebraska to western Douglas County and Sarpy County. Importantly, I need people to understand that I consider Senator Hughes a friend. It wasn't we were targeting Senator Hughes. But what we actually did was go back and look at historically how we got here. Senator Linehan's District 39 moved from the west. District 31 moved from the west. District 49, just ten years ago, moved from the furthest west. So looking at that legislative history, and I want to give some-- some numbers behind this 2010 move, because that was the most recent, in 2010, LD47 lost 16.54; LD49 lost 14.94; LD47 lost 13.1-- 13.13; and LD 44 lost 11.43, almost comparable to what it is today. So we follow what the Legislature has always done, which was move the western district with some of the most significant loss to the east where the most population growth is. If you'll recall, LD49 saw the most population loss in 2010 and Senator-- incumbent Senator Louden was term-limited the following year, and that's why they chose that district. It was that criteria that District 44, who Senator Hughes is slated to be term-limited in 2022. It is important to note that once a senator is elected, they have a constitutional right to serve four years. So looking around that area, Senator Erdman still has four-- three years left to serve, so he was not opted to move that district, and same as Senator Brewer. Under my plan, we would move into the area largely encompassing the two districts that we saw the highest population, which would be most likely south of LD39 and in between LD49. If you'll recall, those were the two highest growth in the area. The other plans that I want to-- the other changes that I want to mention in this plan is that a number of rural legislative districts see changes as a result to add population. Existing splits in Box Butte County, Alliance, and Otoe County, Nebraska City, are eliminated. Dixon County, which was split in order to provide the necessary additional population for LD17, Senator Albrecht, but the result-- that split actually results in unifying the communities of Wakefield and Emerson. Both Wakefield and Emerson actually straddle the county line currently, so moving the district boundary into Dixon County places them wholly within LD17. Again, this is what the Legislature has always done. I'm not saying necessarily we have to do it moving forward, but I think we all can agree, based on the numbers and strictly the numbers, we have to move someone. I am open to the idea of-- of talking about other areas. I am looking for feedback. In fact, today at 1:00, I met with people from Grand Island and there are concerns about areas of precincts and voting districts underneath the map that I proposed. I have already sent those back for new changes. And that's what this is about today, getting feedback to seeing how we can-- if we need to change plans, we will. And with that, I look forward to the public comment and any feedback on all the maps. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Are there any questions from the committee for Senator Wayne? I have a couple. Could you explain, Senator Wayne, with your congressional map, what your-- so I'm reading from the LR30-- LR134-- what your identifiable, understandable district lines are with your congressional map?

WAYNE: Yeah. So by and large, it is Douglas County. The only area that would be in question is the area in Bellevue, which is South Bellevue, and I believe they are identifiable by the streets in which they are drawn. For example, we have south of-- of 370. We have La Vista, moving east of La Vista, which is 84th Street. We used all streets, no different than you using Dodge Street in your plan.

LINEHAN: So you think those streets are as identifiable as Dodge Street and 680?

WAYNE: For those neighborhoods, they are.

LINEHAN: Did you say you split Papillion?

WAYNE: We did have a part of Papillion, but that was only, and let me repeat, only to make sure we did not draw out the incumbent.

LINEHAN: But you did split Papillion.

WAYNE: Yes, I did.

LINEHAN: So you split a community of interest.

WAYNE: To keep the incumbent, yes. I'll be happy to draw out the incumbent if that's what the committee wants.

LINEHAN: And then did you-- you talked about how many districts have lost population. Did you mention any districts in Omaha that have lost population?

WAYNE: Yes, I talked about the highest growth loss of population. There are numerous districts in Omaha that lost population too.

LINEHAN: You remember exactly or close to what District 8 lost in Omaha?

WAYNE: Six to 8 percent, I think.

LINEHAN: I think it was 10, but--

WAYNE: Ten, OK.

LINEHAN: --it-- so 33 districts lost population, is that correct?

WAYNE: Correct.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you, Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: Thank you.

LINEHAN: So we begin. Senator Williams, welcome.

WILLIAMS: Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairperson Linehan, and welcome. And thank you to the members of the committee for all your hard work on a very difficult issue. I'm Matt Williams, M-a-t-t W-i-l-l-i-a-m-s, and I represent Legislative District 36, which is all of Dawson County, all of Custer County, and the north portions of Buffalo County. The geographic center of Nebraska is directly in the middle of Legislative District 36, which I proudly represent. It is the heart of the Heartland. We all know the democratic challenges created for Nebraska with our population growing faster in the east than it is in the west. In fact, as you know and as you just heard from Senator Wayne and Senator Linehan, every district west of District 36, which is right square in the middle of state, has lost enough population to fall below the required population guidelines. Thankfully, my district, Legislative District 36, falls within the required population guidelines. It is a core legislative district, with 21 communities, 13 school districts, 5 critical access hospitals, and a diverse agricultural base all located, again, within Custer, Dawson, and the north portions of Buffalo County. For rural areas to survive and thrive, they need to meet and exceed the expectations of residents when it comes to two critical factors: education and healthcare. You would not move your family to an area that did not meet the educational or healthcare needs of your family. We are fortunate that we meet and exceed those needs in District 36. Reconfiguring a legislative district can cause significant disruptions not only to schools and hospitals, but also to businesses and our state's number-one industry, agriculture. I believe one of the reasons our population numbers have remained constant in our area are the efforts of community and industry leaders, a surprising number of whom have taken on state and national leadership roles. This includes leadership positions in banking, the current chairman of the Nebraska Bankers is from my legislative district; Nebraska Cattlemen; the Hospital Association, the current president or chairman of the Hospital Association is from my legislative district and will be testifying today; the chairman of the currently-- from the Nebraska Corn Growers, and also the president of Nebraska Pork Growers, all come from my legislative district currently. That's

leadership. You will hear from many of those leaders today. These leaders firmly believe the district is on the cusp of broad-based population growth. Our chambers of commerce and our local development companies have worked together on issues such as business recruitment and retention, workforce development, housing, school safety and tax policy. The critical access hospitals, which are major employers in District 36, have successfully built systems that enable them to work collaboratively to communicate the needs of the people they serve to the Legislature through one voice. This has proven to be very valuable with issues such as Medicaid reimbursement. The same collaboration exists for our district schools, thereby allowing them to communicate their shared needs with a unified and effective voice. It is my firm belief that the people living in District 36 are best served by a state senator who comes from their communities of interest in the district and in whom they have confidence and in whom they can hold accountable. As the state senator represented in Legislative District 36, I can say that it would be very disappointing to ignore the unity that has been created within the current boundaries of the district. Leaving the boundaries of the district intact follows the guidelines established by our State Constitution and LR134. Leaving the boundaries of District 36 intact maintains the culture of a core district. It does not divide either Custer or Dawson County and, most importantly, it maintains communities of interest, which include our communities, our schools, our hospitals and our diverse agricultural interests. I have passed out for your review resolutions passed by Gothenburg, Cozad, Lexington, and Broken Bow, all stating that they would like to stay enclo-- included in the current boundaries of Legislative District 36. The bottom line is, for me and for others in my legislative district, we ask you to follow the constitution, follow the guidelines that we established with LR134, look at the culture of this core district and the similarities, and recognize the important commonalities that exist. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairwoman Linehan. Thank you, Senator Williams. First, I want to tell you thank you for coming and actually having something to say and not just reading off a piece of paper that 20 other people are going to be saying the exact same thing today. It helps me when I know about your community, and so I thank you for that. But I do have a question for clarification purposes. So, knowing what you just said, it's my understanding that LB4 would better accommodate these issues. Is that accurate?

WILLIAMS: If I look at the two maps that are proposed, where they are right now, the map presented by Senator Wayne as it relates to District 36 would be preferable. However, I know, and I think we all know as senators, there is more to come and we're looking forward to seeing what those possibilities could be.

BLOOD: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Other questions from the committee? I have one. Was Custer County part of your legislative district before the last redistricting process?

WILLIAMS: It became part of Legislative District 36 during the last redistricting process, and that was a real challenge, I will tell you, Senator Linehan, when I was elected, because the previous senator, Senator John Wightman, had not ever run for election in that county that had not been part of it. And then, during the last couple of years of his service to our state, his health kept him at home more than it kept him out about. So I've worked extremely hard during these last seven years that I've been in the body to develop the-- the relationships that are necessary to speak with one voice for that group. And there were certainly, I would tell you, questions about that involvement early on in my days. Those, I think, have been answered. You will hear some of that testimony today that the inclusion of that now in District 36 makes great sense and displays our commonality and unity.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Other questions? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. All right, I guess what I'm trying to go back to here, Senator Williams, is you made a comment of the impact on hospitals and schools. No matter what happens, that's all going to change for me. I either lose Alliance or I lose Ainsworth. But I'd like to think that either one of them that I lose, that community, and whoever replaces that line and becomes the senator, will still continue to support the schools and support the hospitals and that they'll continue to-- to thrive as they are now. I guess my question is how, as-- as you see it, this change will negatively impact schools and hospitals.

WILLIAMS: Let me give you an example, Senator Brewer, and I appreciate that question. Over this last period of time, through my service on the Health and Human Services Committee, we have had the implementation of-- of Heritage Health, which is the managed care organizations that deal with all of our local critical access hospitals. Because of my involvement and having five critical access

hospitals in my district that all have very similar problems, and you will hear this in-- in further testimony, I've been able to require, almost, the managed care organizations and HHS to come to the district and meet with all five of those critical access hospitals to help solve their problems. We've done some similar things with our schools, with some school safety programs. All the schools in Legislative District 36 are covered by the same ESU, and so that commonality makes great sense. I understand your concern about your district. I'm here talking about District 36.

BREWER: All right.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Any other questions from the committee?

WAYNE: I have a question.

LINEHAN: Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: Can you tell me the difference between-- in the communities between Custer and Dawson County?

WILLIAMS: Senator Wayne, I'm not sure I understand what your question is.

WAYNE: Is there differences in the communities between Custer and-- and Dawson County? Like there's a difference between Douglas County and Sarpy County, I just outlined that and why Douglas County is the core. What I'm asking is, what's the difference bet-- because I'm not from there. I'm not-- I don't represent there.

WILLIAMS: I-- I think there are-- I think there are significant commonalities with the communities. As I mentioned, there are 21 communities. There is one community, Lexington, in Dawson County which has different-- different demographic makeup than the other 20 communities. The other 20 communities are almost identical as far as demographic makeup. There's differences in population size going from, you know, Lexington itself is over 11,000, but then with-- with Cozad and Gothenburg in the 3,500 to 4,000 range, Broken Bow in that same population range.

WAYNE: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you.

WILLIAMS: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Senator Hughes, welcome.

HUGHES: Thank you, Madam Chairman, members of the committee. My name is Dan Hughes, D-a-n H-u-g-h-e-s. I currently represent District 44 in the Nebraska Legislature. Welcome to east-central Nebraska. For those of you coming from Lincoln and Omaha, there's a long ways to go before you hit Colorado and Wyoming. There may not be a lot of people farther west from here, but there is a lot of territory that contributes significantly to the economy and the fabric of the state of Nebraska. I do feel-- thank you very much for serving on this committee. I was a little hesitant to come before you today because of the challenges that I know you have all dealt with getting to this point, and you all know that I helped you get where you're at, so please do not hold that against me as we move forward. You all wanted to be on this committee, if I remember correctly, so thank you for your service. Obviously, I like LB3 better than LB4. LB3 does, more or less, preserve the 44th Legislative District. And the reason that I think it's important that that be the choice is because of the Republican River Basin. Most of you-- I know Senator Lathrop dealt with this issue when he was here before. But the challenges that we have in the Republican River Basin certainly make the 44th District a community of interest and a core community. There was the Republican River Compact that was agreed to with Kansas and Colorado being the drainage basin from the Republican River. And it is important that those counties that are in that basin remain intact to make sure that we can keep Kansas and Colorado in check because of that agreement that we were-- that the U.S. Congress forced us into. Irrigation is the lifeblood of western Nebraska, especially southwest Nebraska. There is some [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] to be better familiari-- [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] the 44th District, but I've also worked hard for the state of Nebraska. I've carried several bills that had a huge impact in Omaha as well as my own district. And most districts today are all different than they were 10 years ago; they're different than they were 20 years ago. So I guess the territorialism, because this is the way the district is, because it's mine, I don't-- I don't agree with that. There are bigger reasons that hold a district together. We need to remember that we do not own our districts; we serve our districts. There are good reasons to leave a lot of districts the way there are, but the arguments are the population shift. We need to try and minimize that as much as possible to make sure we take care of the interests of not only our citizens but the state of Nebraska. With that, I'll be happy to answer any questions. Thank you for your time.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Hughes. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: Thank you, Madam Chairman. All right, Senator Hughes, both these plans I've got concerns with. But I think there's a-- a simple fact of life that we gotta face here, and that is with this movement of population to the east, all of our districts are getting bigger. But I think there's got to be a point we step back and realize that there is a point you can no longer do justice to your district. You can get it that big. And to give you an example, under Senator Wayne's plan, I'll be 200-plus miles long, 150 miles wide. I will encompass an area the size of the country of Croatia. I have two staff, just as someone who has, say, two dozen blocks of Lincoln or Omaha has. So those two people are going to have to manage all the issues, whether it be ag issues with crops and livestock, whether it be roads or bridges or brand inspection or consolidation of schools. There's a point where you fail your district, not because you don't want to, because it's physically impossible. So, you know, I'm concerned about the disintegration of your district in that someone's going to have to make that up, it's going to get bigger, and there's a point where, whether you realize it or not, because most people see western Nebraska as western Nebraska, there are people who wear cowboy hats and drive four-wheel-drive trucks and, other than that, they're pretty much generically the same. And-- and if you live there and you understand these communities, they're very different, very different in-- in the crops they grow or-- or the livestock or-- or the things that they have to deal with day in and day out. Even-- even your district is unique in the weather that you have there. So I guess my question to you is, if the population issue that we're wrestling with here is the sole reason that we use for-- to redistribute, don't you see at a point in the future where we will collapse the ag industry because you'll have a handful of senators that represent the entire state that is impacted by agriculture?

HUGHES: That is-- that is the challenge, and that-- and that's what I was trying to convey, that there is a huge amount of economic activity from agriculture to the state of Nebraska. You know, we hear all the time farmers don't pay income tax. Well, that is absolutely, patently not true. Farmers pay a huge amount of income tax in this state. And to limit the voice that we have in Lincoln based solely-- and-- and the Supreme Court has ruled one man, one vote. I'm not going to argue that point.

BREWER: Understood.

HUGHES: But you and I face similar challenges of the amount of territory and being a good servant to our constituents, of being able to get to them, to hear their concerns, to be visible. You know, that's-- that's part of the problem. If you have, you know, six square blocks in Omaha, it's pretty easy to walk, you know, down the street and-- and people can see you. But for you and I, we're talking hours and hours on the road and thousands and thousands of miles just to get to a community that may be having a celebration where we can be in a parade. You know, that's part of the difference of having that-- being a true representative of the people is being visible to the people in person, and that's a lot of the challenge that we have in western Nebraska and why I don't like seeing these districts continue to get bigger and bigger. But yet one man, one vote is the law of the land, so there needs to be some, I don't-- I don't want to say compromise, but some acknowledgment of that fact, of a way that we could possibly massage that to accomplish both things.

BREWER: All right, thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Are there other questions from the committee? Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, Senator Hughes. Your population, your constituents are in southwest Nebraska. In Senator Wayne's map, they have them moving to basically just west of Douglas County. The-- the people, are they the same as in your district? Would it-- would this be-- is there anything that they're-- the similarities besides being Nebraskans?

HUGHES: There-- there are-- there are similarities and differences between communities, you know, five miles apart. But, you know, the-- the-- the point I was trying to make is, is that Republican River Basin, there is a-- a commonality there because of the basin. It is agriculture. There is some light industry within that, but agriculture is the strongest economic driver. And, yeah, it-- it is, you know, rural, white, aging, you know, whatever other adjective you want to describe them with, but yet they are-- they are the same, but yet we are all different.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Lowe. Are there other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much, Senator Hughes.

HUGHES: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Appreciate you being here. Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you, Senator Linehan. My name is Steve Erdman, S-t-e-v-e E-r-d-m-a-n. I currently today represent ten counties in the Panhandle. Don't know what what it'll be tomorrow, but that's what I have today. So I am-- I'm going to testify. My-- my testimony is going to be very similar to what you've heard before. I have a commonsense approach to solving this issue for the committee. And I appreciate your service there. I had put my name in for this committee, but seeing what it involved, I'm glad they didn't select me, so. [LAUGHTER] And I'm sure glad also that we are a paperless society now because there's only like 500 pages. So when we came today, we got down to the street here and we had a choice of turn to come here or go to Husker Harvest Days, and so I chose to come here. So here's-- here's my thought, and you've heard this before, I want to share it with people in the room, is Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy County have 1,098,000 people. The average district in Nebraska should have 40,031 people. If you take the 1,960,000, divide it by 49, that's what you get. So my scenario is this. We divide the 1,980,000 by 42,000, which is the maximum, 5 percent over the average, you get 26 representatives. So Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy County should have 26. That leaves 23 for the rest of the state. Now those people that live in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy County will say that's crazy because we already have 27, why would we give one up? So I would agree. Let's drop back and you get 27. So if you divide the 1,098,000 by 27, you get 4-- 40,666 people, which is 1.65 percent over the average. So then you take the other balance of the population, 862,000, divide that by the 22 seats that are left, and you get 39,181 people, which is 2 percent under the 4 per-- 4-- the 40,000. So in logic, if you look at it, 1.6 over and 2 percent under is pretty close to being 40 percent. So the issue you have is, as Senator Hughes explained how big his district was, and Senator Brewer and I, when I currently have the ten counties, if you add Senator Hughes's district, we have 33 counties of the 93 counties, which is about 60 percent of the pop-- of the geographic area of the state. So according to Senator Wayne's map, I'm going to be about 250 miles from one corner to the other. So you say, well, 42,000 is too many for the people in Douglas County. Well, let me ask you. In Douglas County, 42,000 people may be six or eight square miles. In Senator Brewer's district, 39,000 people might be 60,000-70,000 square miles' difference. So the point is, you could represent 42,000 people in Douglas and Omaha far easier than Senator Brewer and I could in a district the size we have. So the other issue you will hear is people say, well, we want to follow the constitution. The constitution says you should follow county lines whenever possible. So here's my comment. If you do that in Douglas, Sarpy, and Lancaster County, let me know how that worked out, and then the rest of us will follow your

lead. Because you don't do that in Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy, so why should the rest of us do it? Oh, it's because we're rural Nebraska, right? That's not the way that works. So what I'm asking you to do is start in Douglas, Lancaster, and Sarpy County, divide those seats up till you get 27 seats distributed in those three counties, and then you divide the rest of the state up and those other two dis-- other 22 seats and you give us a population we should have. It's a commonsense approach. You don't look at drawing the lines anywhere but just wherever the population fits, who cares whether red or blue, don't make any difference, and you make a decision based on common sense. Now I know that's difficult, but that is my approach. So I would reject any of these maps that have to do with the Legislature and implement the one that I just explained to you, and you'll not know whether that'll work until you draw the maps. I haven't drawn any maps because I've been just a little busy with fixing your broken tax system and dealing with Game and Parks, and that's a full-time job, dealing with Game and Parks. So that's why I haven't drawn any maps. But I think those people who know how to draw maps should be able to do that, and we should be able to come up with a commonsense solution that people can accept and it will be preserving all of our districts. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Erdman. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: Your 27 in Douglas and Lancaster County, do they include rural senators?

ERDMAN: Pardon me?

WAYNE: Your-- the 27 count that you have--

ERDMAN: It's currently those three counties have 27 representatives.

WAYNE: And do they include the rural senators who are in those counties such as--

ERDMAN: I don't know that. I got that information from Senator Linehan when you had the hearing last week.

WAYNE: So it-- it includes three rural county senators--

ERDMAN: OK.

WAYNE: --Senator Brandt, Senator Dorn, Senator Clements.

ERDMAN: Fine.

WAYNE: So it's really not 27 in those counties independent. It's--

ERDMAN: All those counties, all those representatives touch those counties, right?

WAYNE: They touch those counties, but they also touch four other counties.

ERDMAN: They're part of those-- are they part of those counties?

WAYNE: Yeah, they are.

ERDMAN: All right. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much, Senator Erdman.

ERDMAN: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Hello. Go ahead.

STUART FOX: Hello. Senator-- excuse me. Senator Linehan, members of the Redistricting Committee, my name is Stuart Fox, S-t-u-a-r-t F-o-x. I'm president of the Nebraska State Bank, located in Broken Bow in Custer County. I'm here today in support of a redistricting plan that retains the existing boundaries of District-- or Legislative District 36. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to you about the communities of interest that have and will continue to grow business and commerce in District 36. Senator Williams stated that for communities to grow and thrive, they must meet educational and healthcare needs. I would add to that the importance of business and commerce. Sustainable commerce re-- requires reliable transportation corridors and access to an affordable and reliable source of energy. Business and commerce also require a degree of certainty. District 36 is fortunate to have the Interstate 80 corridor that runs east and west through Dawson County, the Highway 183 corridor that runs north and south through Custer and Dawson Counties, and the Highway 2 corridor that crosses the district from Ravenna through Cu-- through Custer County. The communities located along these important transportation corridors serve as critical access points for the delivery of goods required by people living in nearby communities and supplies the inputs needed by businesses and the manufacturing and agricultural sectors that thrive in District 36. These corridors specifically sustain our agricultural sector. The entire supply chain for farm and livestock industry are represented in the district, and both rely upon a stable transportation

infrastructure. These corridors are also transportation corridors for the many citizens that travel between the communities of Gothenburg, Broken Bow, Cozad, Lexington, and Ravenna for jobs. These larger communities also provide jobs for residents living in the smaller communities in Dawson, Custer, and the northern part of Buffalo County. Senator Williams characterized 36 as the heart of the Heartland. The transportation corridors spanning the district represent central nervous system. For a heart not to miss a beat, it requires a strong and healthy central nervous system. District 36 is also fortunate to have the home offices for both Dawson and Custer Public Power Districts, which provide an affordable and reliable source of energy. Together with the hospitals, these power districts are major employers within Legislative District 36, with employees living throughout Daws-- Dawson, Custer, and the northern part of Buffalo Counties. Business is thriving in District 36. Even though the district has lost some population, business leaders firmly believe we are on the cusp of broad-based growth. Our chambers of commerce and economic development companies have worked hand in hand with Senator Williams on issues such as workforce development, housing, and tax policy. The systems we have built are helping us grow our area and, in turn, our area has contributed to the state's economic growth. It would be a shame to ignore the work we've done by breaking apart something that is proven to work. It is our firm belief that people living in District 36 are best served by a state senator who comes from our communities of interest and in whom we have confidence and can hold accountable. Please leave District 36 alone. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Legislative District 36.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Mr. Fox. Are there questions? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: OK, I understand you're probably part of a banking cabal of folks that are going to try and protect Senator Williams. But I think there's some simple facts, because I'm getting a bit of a raw nerve here, on the whole issue of Custer County. Understand that if we walked to Custer County right now, I think I'm probably just as popular as he is. That's cowboy country. And I think if you take a look at the folks that go from Thomas, Logan, Blaine, all the counties I own, they go to Custer County for medical care; they go for food. And so let's understand this is not Williams's district. This is the 36th District, and whoever represents you should represent you. And however it ends up shaping, I'm going to take ownership of whatever they give me and I'm going to give away whatever they take, because that's the system. So, you know, I understand you want to protect him, but I think at some point we need

to understand that-- that we've got a responsibility here to-- to figure out how to make Nebraska move forward. And the idea that the way it is now is the only way it can be, I think, is not being realistic. I understand what you're saying about I-80 and things that run up and down there. I would agree with that. But Custer County, I believe, is a different beast. Anyway, that's my opinion.

STUART FOX: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Yes, Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: So as-- just so everybody knows, Senator Erdman called me like the day after the numbers came out. And I actually tried to draw the map multiple times that way and it just doesn't work out, unfortunately. So my question to you is, it's given, I think, by both sets of maps, a district is going to move somewhere into Sarpy County, maybe Douglas. That's probably still the argument, of where. So which district from the 3rd would you like to move?

STUART FOX: [LAUGH] Obviously, we don't want to move any. We-- we were previously part of District 43, you know, the last redistricting, and so we-- we have been messed with; at least from Custer County we were messed with the last time, and we, you know, we've been with District 36 now for-- for ten years. And I'm not a part of a banking cabal but, you know, we-- we do work really well together. I was not in favor of leaving District 43 the last time, but we-- we do have a lot of commonalities. There's a lot of businesses that go back and forth between Custer and Dawson. I agree wholeheartedly that, yeah, we are cowboy country. We are a huge trade-- trade area. And people, they travel in Nebraska to the southeast. And so, yes, we-- we do get that. But from a-- from a trade industry, I think we are a little bit of a different-- a different animal than what else would be in your district.

WAYNE: And I want everybody in the room and people watching to understand that the most compelling argument Senator Hughes and Senator Brewer have made to me about my map is, once you go past Kearney, and Senator Brewer has shown me plenty of past Kearney over the four years, my map would reduce that to five senators for the rest of the half of the state. I understand that concern, but I still have a constitutional obligation, because I believe in the constitution, to move somebody. So everybody who-- so I-- so I get that and I'm open to that. But I'm going to ask that same question from a lot of people because if not there, then where, because I want that feedback so I can-- I can talk to the colleagues and figure out how we do that, because we can't just throw out the constitution. So

you didn't answer my question, so I'm going to ask again, if not from senator-- where else in the 3rd do we do it?

STUART FOX: I'm not sure that I can answer that question because I'm--

WAYNE: OK. That's fair.

STUART FOX: --I'm not going to say that I want to move--

WAYNE: "I don't know" is a--

STUART FOX: --any of the districts, you know.

WAYNE: "I don't know" is a very good answer.

STUART FOX: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. You-- you have a very hard job and I don't envy you, so, yes.

WAYNE: Thank you.

STUART FOX: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here. Good afternoon.

TODD RHODES: Good afternoon, Chairperson Linehan and members of the Redistrict-- Redistricting Committee. I'm Dr. Todd Rhodes. That's T-o-d-d R-h-o-d-e-s. I'm from Gothenburg, Nebraska, and I'm the superintendent of Gothenburg Public Schools. I'm here today in support of a redistricting plan that retains existing boundaries of Legislative District number 36. I thank you for the work that you've done and the work ahead. I know that it's a monumental task when we look at redistrict-- redistricting, and I thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of the Redistricting Committee. There are 13 school districts within the boundaries of Legislative District number 36. Importantly, all 13 of those school districts are served and supported by the same ESU, Educational Service Unit number 10. ESU 10 provides schools in District number 36 with resources for administrators, staff, and teachers in the areas of professional development and extended learning opportunities, cooperative purchasing, special education support and technology services. While we may compete against each other in athletic and academic competitions, we certainly cooperate in many realms as well. And mainly those include programing and policy, as much as many rural school districts do. We do feel, and on behalf of those 13 school districts, we feel that we're an important community of interest in

District 36 and we feel like we've been very well-- very well represented in District 36 as well. As many of you know, having a strong relationship with your state senator is an integral part to being a successful school system. I don't think I have to tell the senators that school funding is an ongoing conversation and topic every year. In some cases it can be a hot topic. We believe it's invaluable for the school districts that are within District 36 to discuss school funding policy that affects all 13 of our school districts in similar fashion with a single state senator. As a district, the relationships we've made, the lines of communication that we've established, and the shared collaboration between schools has given District 36 schools a unified voice as it relates to education policy. It is our firm belief that the people living in District 36 are best served by a state senator who comes from our communities of interest, in whom we have confidence and we can hold accountable. As Senator Williams said in his opening, there are two things a community must do to thrive in Nebraska. It must meet the educational needs of its members and the healthcare needs of its members. District 36 is and will be well positioned to meet those educational needs of our communities if we keep District 36 intact. Once again, I thank you for the work that you're doing, the work you've done, obviously, and the work ahead. I-- I certainly understand that it is a monumental task and thank you for the opportunity to speak in front of the committee this afternoon.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you, Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Rhodes, for being here and for helping with our students. It seems like Douglas County would like more senators than just one. You're saying it-- it's beneficial to work with just one senator. Wouldn't it be better to work with two senators in the area?

TODD RHODES: We-- we feel like we have a unified voice in District 36. We-- we educate about 7,200 students annually. That's about where we're at. That does not include our-- our four- and five-year-olds. You'd add about 600-- 600-800 students if you include those four to five. But what we're able to do is have ongoing direct conversations with our District 36 representative. And so with-- with-- with those 13 school districts, we-- we really are a network of school systems out there. And so to-- to have that one unified voice with one senator works very well for-- for District number 36.

LOWE: Maybe it will work better for Dawson County too.

TODD RHODES: That's possible.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Lowe. Are there any other questions from the committee? Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: The same question that I asked previously: For those who are really involved in dealing with the Legislature, which you-- I've seen you a couple times, I believe-- if not senator-- if not District 44, then-- then where do we move?

TODD RHODES: Well, this-- this isn't an answer, but that's the reason I'm a school administrator and-- and you-- you folks are-- are the state senators. I-- I-- I don't know as I have an answer for that, Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Other questions? ESU 10, is that what you said?

TODD RHODES: Yes.

LINEHAN: How many schools are in ESU 10?

TODD RHODES: It's one of the bigger ESU in-- in the state. I think there are well over 30 schools that are in ESU 10.

LINEHAN: So the 13 schools in your-- in this legislative district are not the totality of the ESU 10?

TODD RHODES: No, no, not at all, not at all.

LINEHAN: And out of the 13 schools that are in your district, how many belong to NRCSA?

TODD RHODES: I believe we all are a part of NRCSA. Just recently, this past school year, Lexington Public Schools joined NRCSA as well.

LINEHAN: But are they also not part of GNSA?

TODD RHODES: Lexington is a part of GNSA as well.

LINEHAN: And how many belong to STANCE?

TODD RHODES: Gothenburg is the only school district out of those 13 that belong to STANCE.

LINEHAN: So out of your 13 school districts, one of them belongs to the big group, GNSA, one belongs to STANCE, and the rest are all in NRCSA.

TODD RHODES: That is correct.

LINEHAN: OK, which generally have different opinions when it comes to school funding.

TODD RHODES: Very true.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there other questions from the committee? Thank you very much for being here.

TODD RHODES: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Go ahead.

LESLIE MARSH: Senator Linehan, members of the Redistricting Committee, my name is Leslie Marsh, L-e-s-l-i-e M-a-r-s-h. I'm the chief executive officer for the Lexington Regional Health Center and currently serve as the chair of the Nebraska Hospital Association. Today, I'm here in a personal capacity in support of a redistricting plan that retains the existing boundaries of the Legislative District 36. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak to you about the communities of interest surrounding the critical access hospitals in the district. People living in the District 36 rely on five critical access hospitals for healthcare services. A critical access hospital is a federal designation given to certain rural hospitals by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The designation was created by Congress in response to hospital closures in the rural areas in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Each critical access hospital in District 36 is designed to meet the unique needs of the surrounding communities. However, all five hospitals share specialty providers and other critical components necessary to make each hospital work. Each hospital has a small number of acute care inpatient beds. They can serve-- they can also serve as Medicare-approved rehabilitation beds, commonly referred to as swing beds, and they provide 24/7 emergency services. The five hospitals located in District 36 are major employers in the district, with employees living throughout Custer, Dawson, and the no-- northern part of Buffalo Counties. The hospitals are strategically located so that the people living in the district live within reasonable driving distance to find the services they require. Together, as part of the Legislative District 36, we have successfully built systems that enable the five hospitals to work collaboratively while focusing on

the unique needs of the people we serve. Importantly, we have also built systems that allow us to communicate and relay the needs of the people we serve to the Nebraska Legislature through one voice. This has been exceedingly helpful during the state's transition to managed care for Medicaid recipients and in conversations related to the adoption of Medicaid expansion. As a result of the systems that have been created specific to District 36, I'm proud to be here to tell the members of the Redistricting Committee that people living in District 36 have equal access to the unique healthcare services they need. We believe it would be a disservice to the people in District 36 to break apart a system that has proven to be so successful. I'd like to reiterate what Senator Williams stressed in his statements to the committee. For communities to grow and thrive, they must meet the educational needs of their citizens and they must provide a healthcare system that is accessible and responsive. Senator Williams also characterized District 36 as the heart of the Heartland. I couldn't agree more. I think the five critical access hospitals in the district help keep that heart beating. It's our firm belief that people living in District 36 are best served by a state senator who comes from our communities of interest and in whom we have confidence and can hold accountable. Please leave District 36 intact. Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to advocate on behalf of Legislative District 36.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Ms. Marsh. Are there questions? Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: This is more because I'm not from the area and I'm looking at the current map. Where are the-- the hospitals located?

LESLIE MARSH: There's one in Cozad, one in Gothenburg, one in Callaway, and one in Broken Bow.

WAYNE: So is it safe to say that Millard, Pheasanton [SIC] and Ravenna are-- don't have any hospitals in their area?

LESLIE MARSH: They have no critical access hospitals in their area. They have-- so I'm speaking about the critical access hospitals. They have a larger-- in Kearney, they would be going to Kearney, likely.

WAYNE: So-- so from a community interest standpoint, they would not be considered as part of the community of interest?

LESLIE MARSH: They'd be considered people we provide services to. But in terms of getting together with other critical access hospitals--

WAYNE: So--

LESLIE MARSH: --we would be talking about those people when we're talking about--

WAYNE: No, what I'm-- I'm truly trying to understand, because it's-- I keep hearing communities of interest and-- and hospitals, so I'm-- I'm not from the area, so I'm trying to look-- I'm looking at the map. So Buffalo County is-- is served by them, but they have no hospitals. Thomas, Hooker, Grant, Blaine, and Loup, I'm assuming, are all served by Custer or by Broken Bow.

LESLIE MARSH: I-- I would imagine so, yes.

WAYNE: So when I think of community of interest, I think of my-- my district, where I have Florence, which has been a community, which is-- was a small town, then it-- Omaha consumed it. So that's how I'm thinking of community interest, and I'm trying to understand this because this is a big deal for the next ten years. So your community of interest is based off of hospitals. Now I'm sure Williams will say-- Senator Williams will bring up other ones. I'm just talking hospital community of interest are Custer and Dawson. Buffalo is not considered that.

LESLIE MARSH: Well, Pleasanton, for example, we have people that come to Lexington Regional Health Center from Pleasanton and we have people that work at our hospital from Pleasanton.

WAYNE: So is the community of interest the hospitals themselves or the people they serve?

LESLIE MARSH: It would be the hospitals and the people that they serve.

WAYNE: So then the community of interest extends all the way to Blaine, Loup, Thomas, and maybe Brown and Rock.

LESLIE MARSH: I-- I guess I don't have enough expertise to really say.

WAYNE: Well, you-- you're saying-- and I'm not trying to pick on you. I'm trying to figure out, so when we get back and we're going through this, I want to make sure we keep western Nebraska community of interests. Like Senator Hughes laid out with the water, I think that's a big deal that I didn't account when I drew my map. So I need to think about that. So when I keep hearing hospitals, because it's been said in five different testimonies, I want to know where that

is. So if it's the people, then it's-- it's not really the hospitals themselves. That's what I'm trying to figure out.

LESLIE MARSH: It's the ho-- it's the people we serve. So our peoples-- our people are ag people.

WAYNE: OK.

LESLIE MARSH: They're people with the same-- you know, our community health needs assessments, they would be-- have the same diseases.

WAYNE: Got it.

LESLIE MARSH: They would have the same, you know--

WAYNE: No, that makes sense to me. I really appreciate that. I'm just asking because I don't-- I'm not--

LESLIE MARSH: Yeah, um-hum.

WAYNE: I'm from north Omaha.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Are there other questions from the committee? Senator Geist.

GEIST: Yes, thank you. Thank you for your testimony. It's helpful. I have-- I'm curious if-- let's just say something happened and your district was divided. Could you not continue the collaboration that you're con-- that you're working on now with two senators involved?

LESLIE MARSH: It's not that we wouldn't continue the collaboration. It's just that, as Medicaid expansion and-- and our managed Medicaid systems came into place and as we've evolved over time, we've really built strong relationships with Senator Williams and-- and all five of us. We meet together. We-- you know, whenever we have people out from Department of Health and Human Services, we have similar issues because pa-- our patients are fluid as well. They may end up going to Broken Bow for some services but to Lexington Regional for others. It's just-- of course we would still collaborate with folks. It's just we have a very strong relationship with [INAUDIBLE]

GEIST: Well, and he will be term-limited.

LESLIE MARSH: Right, absolutely.

GEIST: And so you'll be establishing a new relationship anyway, so--

LESLIE MARSH: But if those five hospitals would be broken up, then I-- I think we would just have less of a unified voice, regardless of who is-- who it is, but--

GEIST: OK. Thank you.

LESLIE MARSH: Thanks.

LINEHAN: Other questions from the committee?

LESLIE MARSH: Thank you.

LINEHAN: I have-- no, I have one.

LESLIE MARSH: Oh, sorry. [INAUDIBLE]

LINEHAN: I have kind of a couple, actually. That's OK. So critical access hospitals have been around since when?

LESLIE MARSH: Since the-- 1996, I think, was when they first started, 19-- and then 2006 sunsetted.

LINEHAN: So before Custer and Dawson were in the same legislative district, did you have a relationship?

LESLIE MARSH: Well, I can only-- I've been there just as CEO for ten years and we've had a strong relationship since-- over the past ten years.

LINEHAN: But you don't know that there was or was not one before that?

LESLIE MARSH: I don't really know how strong it was. I think that they had a strong relationship, but I don't know.

LINEHAN: So they're in Callaway and Broken Bow in Custer County.

LESLIE MARSH: Yes.

LINEHAN: And I'm looking at the map here. How far is Broken Bow from Lexington?

LESLIE MARSH: It's about 45 miles, I think.

LINEHAN: OK. OK, so do mo-- I grew up in Johnson County, Nebraska, with Johnson County Hospital, and my mother always said we needed to support our county, so we went to the county hospital. Is that unique

to Johnson County or is that kind of the way everybody in Nebraska feels about their county?

LESLIE MARSH: I think mo-- for the most part, I think, you know, as we get more sophisticated and-- and bring on new services and things, then maybe we'll be providing services that aren't offered somewhere else, like in Broken Bow, for example.

LINEHAN: But people do tend to support--

LESLIE MARSH: Sure.

LINEHAN: --their county. Thank you very much. Are there other questions? Seeing none, thank you.

LESLIE MARSH: OK. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Next.

NATHAN LEACH: Madam Chair, members of the Redistricting Committee, my name is Nathan Leach, N-a-t-h-a-n L-e-a-c-h. I am a resident of 30-- District 37 in Kearney and I'm speaking in a neutral capacity on behalf of Nonpartisan Nebraska. Nonpartisan Nebraska was incorporated a year ago by a politically diverse group of Nebraskans who came together with a common belief in the nonpartisan vision that former U.S. Senator George Norris had for our Unicameral Legislature. Our organization is dedicated to educating Nebraskans about the history of our Unicameral and how it works. We believe that the historic rules, customs, and procedures of the Nebraska Unicameral Legislature provide a path for issue-by-issue collaboration amongst lawmakers, emphasize the influence a single Legislature can have without top-down partisan leadership controlling the process, and result in better representation for the people of Nebraska. The Nebraska Legislature is changing. Political scientists and poli-- political observers are all saying the same thing. Our Unicameral is becoming more partisan and the partisanship is happening rapidly. This is probably due to term limits, a sharp increase in campaign costs, influence from the executive branch, along with partisanship on the national stage or a combination of these and many other factors. I don't quite know. But I fear that if the partisanship continues to grow, that the Unicameral that many Nebraskans know and love will become entirely unrecog--unrecognizable. If I was a state senator sitting on this committee, I would-- I would want to be able to look at myself in the mirror and say that my votes on redistricting throughout this once-in-a-decade process are true to the noble expectations that Nebraskans have set for members of the only

nonpartisan Legislature in the country. Redistricting is one of the most important duties of the Legislature, and the people of Nebraska are largely opposed to manipulations designed to benefit one party or the other. Districts should be written fairly and without regard for political party. It is incumbent on senators to construct legislative districts which adhere closely to the average population predicted by the census, knowing that the trend lines indicated-- indicate that over the next ten years, most districts losing population will continue to lose population and those gaining population over the last ten years will likely continue to increase in population. Therefore, underweighing rural districts while overweighing urban districts today will result in much greater distortions at the next redistricting and disenfranchise voters through conscious and intentional actions rather than the principles of one person, one vote, that our republican form of government relies on. Regardless of political party, districts should follow natural local divisions which are focused on counties or, in rural Nebraska, on trade areas or natural soil or water variations. These divisions should be easily understandable by the average voter. I strongly urge the members of this committee and the members of the Legislature to be true to the spirit of the Unicameral, to put parties aside and create districts that are fair and consistent with our nonpartisan values. Failing to do so will result in yet another serious blow in our Nebraska Unicameral experiment. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Mr. Leach. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: I just want to say thank you for the 10:00 emails about rules. For those who are watching, if you have a question about rules in the Legislature, he is-- he is the man who I bounce ideas off at 10:30 at night about rules, so I appreciate it.

NATHAN LEACH: I appreciate it, too, Senator.

LINEHAN: Senator Briese.

BRIESE: Thank you, Chairman Linehan. Thank you for being here, Mr. Leach. You heard conversation earlier about the expanding size of rural districts, geographical size, and you certainly are an advocate for effective representation in government. Does that trouble you that some of those districts are becoming that large, Senator Brewer's becoming larger than the country of Croatia-- Croatia?

NATHAN LEACH: Oh, absolutely, and I think there's a number of-- of solutions to look at. I don't speak for Nonpartisan Nebraska when

saying this, but, you know, Senator Brewer mentioned that he only had two members of staff. It would be a solution to increase the member-- or increase the cost of staffing in those senators so that they can be more responsive to their districts. I think the constitution sets the limit on the number of-- of districts at 50. You know, increasing a district or maybe moving that to 52 or 51, I know Speaker Scheer had mentioned that idea. I mean, that definitely is something worth considering. I think the size of the Unicameral is very important. Having a small body is-- allows for nonpartisanship to really work, and so you'd want to be careful when increasing the size of the Unicameral too much. But I think it's important that we recognize that the constitution requires one person, one vote, and that's just kind of what we have to work with. I think there might be some solutions, though, like I mentioned, just increasing resources for rural senators so they can be connected to their staff or to their constituents, and perhaps increasing the number of legislators could also be a solution. But I'd want to make sure that any increase in legislators was a small increase and wouldn't change the nature of the Unicameral.

BRIESE: Thank you for that. But fair to say, though, there are some consequences, negative consequences associated with adherence to strict population equality in legislative redistricting?

NATHAN LEACH: I don't-- I don't really think so. I mean, the bottom line is we're all-- the whole point of government is that the government represents the people.

BRIESE: OK, thank you.

NATHAN LEACH: And when you-- when you do the variance, you-- you take away from that, so.

LINEHAN: Thank-- thank you, Senator Briese. Other questions from the committee? I think you said in your testimony-- did you say something about if you couldn't follow county lines or it had to be more than one county-- what was the line about water?

NATHAN LEACH: Yes, the water line, to be honest with you, that comment was written by the chair of our board of directors, former Senator Al Davis, and so I took his word on that. The-- the primary point of--

LINEHAN: Could you just re-- re-- I just wanted you to repeat it, if you could.

NATHAN LEACH: Oh. Oh, of course. Sorry. Let me find it here. So regardless of-- so political-- they should follow natural local divisions which are focused on counties or, in rural Nebraska, on trade areas or natural soil or water variations, so.

LINEHAN: Like in a river basin?

NATHAN LEACH: Exactly, yes.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much. Other questions? Thank you very much for being here.

NATHAN LEACH: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Welcome.

CRAIG UDEN: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Lin-- Lin-- Linehan and members of the Redistricting Committee. My name is Craig Uden, C-r-a-i-g U-d-e-- U-d-e-n. Excuse me. I'm one of the owners and operators of Darr Feedlot, Incorporated. I'm here in support of re-- of the redistricting plan that retains the existing boundaries of legis-- Legislative District 36. Thank you for the opportunity to-- I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today. Modern agriculture is the backbone of Nebraska's economy, and District 36 completely mirrors what agriculture looks like today. There's a diverse, vibrant, strong ecosystem of agriculture in the boundaries of our district, and this ecosystem that helped District 36 thrive as a community of interest through synergy and common mindset of working together to facilitate raw product, to further process-- process product, and/or specialized crops, as we have those types of facilities to accomplish that in District 36. It's hard to understand how important the role agriculture has played in keeping District 36 a community of interest. Within District 36, there are many irrigated and some nonirrigated fields of corn, soybeans, and alfalfa, and specialty crops that include organic crops, popcorn, producers of white and yellow food-grade corn, for one-- for one of only two gathering facilities in the United States for Frito-Lay in Gothenburg. Hog production, cow/calf and feedlot operations in Dawson and Custer Counties produce branded high-quality animal proteins that are some of the most progressive in their production methods. District 36 also contains major packing and distribu-- distribution industries, along with other vital entities such as Bayer CropScience, Clark Special Grains, to name a few. Never-- nearly every part of the supply chain to provide beef in the beef state is present in District 36, evident by many cattle feedlots and Tyson's beef packing in Lexington. The ability of these operations to work

together and collaborate as a single district is an important part of their success, as we have built systems that are helping us grow agricultural production. It would be a shame to ignore the work we've done by breaking apart something that is proven to work, and through this collaboration that we've been able to work together to find common voice for agriculture interests in the district. We have jointly addressed issues such as workforce, weight limits on farm equipment, and tax policy. It is our firm belief the people living in District 36 are best served by a state senator who comes from one of our communities of interest, in whom we've had confidence and can be held accountable. Senator Williams stated that District 36 is the heart of the Heartland, and I echo that and add that our farming and livestock industry represent the district's lifeblood, circulating through the heart. Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to advocate on behalf of-- behalf of District 36. And if we could, we'd like to leave District 36 intact. Thank you for hearing me today.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? You're an ag producer, correct?

CRAIG UDEN: Um-hum.

LINEHAN: So wouldn't most of ag like to leave as many legislative districts in-- west of-- in the ag areas as we could?

CRAIG UDEN: We're very unique in that area where we have a lot of irrigation, we have a lot of production. I like to call it gate to plate, whether it's working with the grain to feed the livestock and further process it on to--

LINEHAN: So one of the maps before us today does away with Legislative District 44, which is the southwest corner of the state. Do you support that?

CRAIG UDEN: Well, I don't-- I don't like seeing any of our districts being divided up. But that is just--

LINEHAN: So you're not in support of doing away with District 44 and moving it to Sarpy County [INAUDIBLE]

CRAIG UDEN: That is up to this committee to-- to-- to handle that. I have been part of District 44. I've been in the redrawn district when the southern part of Dawson County was in 44. There's probably ten--

LINEHAN: So when that happened, did the business change dramatically when the dis-- legislative district lines changed? Did that--

CRAIG UDEN: No, but when you live-- when you live five miles away from the-- the senator in 36 but you-- 44 was 200 miles away, it was a little challenging.

LINEHAN: Well, yes. Well, thank you for making--

CRAIG UDEN: From a com--

LINEHAN: --that point.

CRAIG UDEN: From-- from-- from a--

LINEHAN: It's challenging when you live 44--

CRAIG UDEN: From a commonality standpoint, it was-- it-- it was challenging--

LINEHAN: Yes.

CRAIG UDEN: --to have that representative because just a small part of our county was carved off to go into a bigger district.

LINEHAN: Yes, it's hard to be hundreds of miles away.

CRAIG UDEN: We're a very progressive district.

LINEHAN: Yes.

CRAIG UDEN: And--

LINEHAN: Thank you. Other questions? Thank you very much for being here.

CRAIG UDEN: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Hi.

DANIELLE HELZER: Hi. My name is Danielle Helzer, D-a-n-i-e-l-l-e H-e-l-z-e-r, and I'm the mission impact director of YWCA of Grand Island. We are located at 211 East Fonner Park Road in Grand Island. We do serve constituents in LD33, 34, and 35. So we are testifying today to provide feedback on the redistricting process as it pertains to Nebraska's legislative districts. We are in support of Senator Wayne's proposals of LD33, 34 and 35. Grand Island is uniquely positioned as an urban area in central Nebraska. Recent census data

has Grand-- Grand Island's population just over the 50,000 mark. According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 16 percent of Grand Island's population is foreign born, nearly 20 percent of our community is below the poverty line, and 40 percent identify as people of color. Grand Island has a distinct voice in Nebraska. In a community our size, this means that people, all background-- of all backgrounds are attending school together, patronizing the same businesses and working together, and this diversity is honestly what makes Grand Island such a unique and incredible place to live. Both Senator Linehan and Senator Wayne's map proposals now include a swath of eastern Grand Island that has a strong Latino community and a growing East African presence. This section of town, near Lincoln Elementary School, was previously assigned to LD34. It's now in LD35, and it honestly makes more sense that it's included in LD35, so we appreciate that change. Senator Wayne's current proposal of LD35 is the most inclusive map of our community. Further, we support Senator Wayne's map of LD34, which includes Grand Island west of Highway 281 in District 34. This honors the existing core of LD34 and keeps it as compact as possible. In contrast, Senator Linehan's map of LD33 presents a significant change by removing western Grand Island from LD34 and lumping it in with Hastings in LD33. So we support-- like I mentioned, we support Senator Wayne's maps for LD33, 34, 35. We do believe that these are what represent the core interest of our communities, so we encourage this committee to keep the city of Grand Island as a whole legislative district as much as possible, most closely represented by Senator Wayne's maps. This allows for all of our interests to be represented by leaders who know the unique needs of our community, who represent our needs, and who will advocate for us. We also urge the committee to be mindful of marginalized and minority voices across Nebraska and to consider historic and cultural ties that will keep our communities whole throughout the state. So thanks again for your overwhelming commitment and your time and service. This is not an easy task. Appreciate it.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much. Are there questions from the committee? I think Senator Wayne and I should get your phone number. [LAUGH]

WAYNE: Yeah.

LINEHAN: So if you'd leave that on your green sheet, that'd be helpful.

DANIELLE HELZER: Absolutely.

LINEHAN: OK.

DANIELLE HELZER: Great. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here. Go ahead.

KATHY WILMOT: Kathy Wilmot, and I am from District 44, so you're going to hear about something besides District 36. Farming, ranching, hunting, the availability of water, irrigation moratoriums, the compact between Kansas, Nebraska and Colorado, and by the way, you're not going to see many farmers probably here today from my area because we also have another common interest, and that is we've been hit by a drought and many of our farmers are having to pick the corn crop to feed to the cows because we don't have anything to harvest. And so we are primarily a farming/ranching people, and needless to say, the water issue has everything to do with our everyday life and how we have struggled to make a living for many decades. And all of the seven bottom-tier counties in southwest Nebraska contain or are in the Republican River Valley, and that is just vital to our area. We share a border with Kansas. Those people regularly come over to shop because we don't tax on food items. They come and enjoy the recreational opportunities at the Strunk Lake and the Hugh Butler Lake and Trenton's Swanson Reservoir and the Harlan County Dam. These are all our communities of interest that we share in that area. The LB4 would take our District 44, where we share so much in common, and it would split us up. And this plan would disperse us to some other individuals or areas that don't really understand our particular issues and concerns that we have. It's critical that we keep a legislator that can speak for us and advocate for our region because, I'll guarantee you, there's many sitting here today to listen that, you know, if I brought you out to the farm, we'd have to do a lot of, quote, education. Likewise, you'd have to educate me if I went to the city. And so it's very important for us to maintain that representation that can speak for us. Also, we-- we can move our district boundary further east, which is what LB that Senator Linehan has brought. It does move us further east, but that's OK. It still brings in the Harlan County area, the drainage area, etcetera, so still there's a commonality there. We can live with that map. I'd like to just jump in real quick, say, too, with LB1, we like that one better because it does preserve a little bit more of a rural voice for us out there. We know we're kind of unique. And as far as the State Board of Education districts, we're a little concerned because out of eight people on that board, which I have served on that board in the past and I know how hard it was to advocate for our small schools, for the unique transportation issues that we face trying to get kids back and forth to school, you know, if-- if our bus gets stuck in a snowdrift, they can't just walk to the nearest house on

that block and they're not going to freeze to death. We may be 20, 25, 30 miles from someplace and we're going to have to wait for somebody to get to our kids. So those are some of the things I wanted to bring to you. Probably my largest heartburn is the legislative district. I know you guys have heard from me many times in the past over issues. It's because I care. It's because I know other people are working like I had to years ago. I'm now retired. Now I can speak out and try to-- try to be a voice for people in my area that are busy working. Again, I thank you for the opportunity. I don't envy the job you're trying to do because, you know, we're going to be upset no matter what but--

LINEHAN: You have served.

KATHY WILMOT: Thank you. [LAUGH] Thank you.

LINEHAN: Are there questions from the committee? When were you on the state school board?

KATHY WILMOT: Oh, heavens, that was decades ago, about '95 to, I think, 2001, right in there, long, long ago.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for your service.

KATHY WILMOT: Thank you.

LINEHAN: And thank you for being here.

KATHY WILMOT: Oops.

WAYNE: Senator Blood.

LINEHAN: I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry. Senator Blood, I didn't see you. Senator Blood.

BLOOD: That's all right. Thank you, Chairwoman Linehan. And thank you for coming today. I just need a-- a little help with clarification.

KATHY WILMOT: OK.

BLOOD: So I am looking at the 2011 map of how many counties and where it's at for District 44. And I am looking at LB3 and LB4. We have a lot of maps in front of us. I apologize for the hesitation here.

KATHY WILMOT: Was gonna say, I better hurry and look at those too. Oops, these look different. Go ahead.

BLOOD: So I'm looking and comparing the counties. What-- what counties of concern that have been brought into your district? Because really, if we just take the thought of taking-- removing 44 and putting it somewhere else, we're not really removing a district; we're just changing a number to another area. I'm-- I'm a little confused, and-- and I'm truly trying to figure out, based on what you said.

KATHY WILMOT: OK

BLOOD: Where are the areas of concern that have been brought into your area? Because you had ten counties in 2011; one of these maps has ten counties and another map has nine counties; one, as you noted, was further east; other is more south, towards Kansas, which you had stated that you do have some things in common with Kansas.

KATHY WILMOT: Sure.

BLOOD: What are your-- your clarifying concerns that I can take back with me to Lincoln tonight?

KATHY WILMOT: Yeah, I was going to say I don't have what you're looking at right in front of me. But if I remember right, I think it takes away-- Senator Wayne's map takes away Chase, Hayes, Dundy, and Hitchcock. Am I correct? OK. And, see, Dundy and Hitchcock particularly, they are definitely in our community of interest. They share the Republican River Valley with us. So I think specifically, in my opinion, removing Dundy and Hitchcock is a huge error as far as splitting up our community of interest. However, if you go ahead and extend it on to Webster and Nuckolls, again, I don't see a problem with that particularly. I know it makes it a lot of travel area, like they said, for legislators. Well, I guess that's what you get when you file. But, you know, it's still the drainage area off of the Republican River Valley, off of Harlan County Dam. There's still irrigation concerns that we share in common. Not that I want to lose Perkins or any of them, but, you know, they perhaps would do fine up with the other area. But that bottom tier, to me, really needs to stay together.

BLOOD: Oh. OK. I'm sorry, I'm backing us up. Did-- did you say you thought you would lose Chase and Hayes?

KATHY WILMOT: On which map are you looking?

BLOOD: Well, both maps show me--

KATHY WILMOT: Per--

BLOOD: --Chase-- OK, so map number-- I'll just make it really easy for everybody. So on LB3--

KATHY WILMOT: I don't--

BLOOD: --Chase, Hayes, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Furnas, Harlan, Franklin, Webster, and a little bit of Phelps are in there, while with LB4 I see Hitchcock, Dundy, Hayes, Chase, Perkins, Keith, Arthur, Garden, Deuel, Cheyenne, and Morrill.

KATHY WILMOT: Yeah. And, see, the dis-- the map LB4 removes specifically the ones that I think are extremely crucial, Dundy and Hitchcock. They're definitely in the Republican River Valley. That is our community of interest, all of the farming, etcetera.

BLOOD: Oh, OK. So for clarification-- I think Senator Brewer knows what you're talking about now-- you're saying that to the east, you want to hold on to-- to Red Willow, Furnas, and Harlan?

KATHY WILMOT: Well, definitely, we want to go with LB3: Chase, Hayes, Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Furnas Harlan, Franklin, Webster. The only-- the only thing that you've really changed for us there as far as our community of interest is you've added Webster and Franklin and it has removed Perkins, Frontier, Gosper. I mean, there's a balance there because at least you still have maintained that Republican River Valley. I'm missing-- I'm not getting something explained.

LINEHAN: I think maybe-- you-- let me try and help.

KATHY WILMOT: OK.

LINEHAN: Tell us the counties that are in the Republican--

KATHY WILMOT: River Valley?

LINEHAN: --Basin, yes.

KATHY WILMOT: OK. You've got Dundy, Hitchcock, Red Willow, Furnas, Harlan, and then Franklin, Webster is still a drainage-type area. You're-- you've got that whole bottom tier.

LINEHAN: So--

KATHY WILMOT: However, you know, Chase and Hayes, they're kind of on the northern piece of that. They're still in that valley because the river goes up.

LINEHAN: I get it.

KATHY WILMOT: I'm just going to say, I'm--

LINEHAN: Does that help, Senator Blood?

BLOOD: It does. I-- I appreciate your patience.

KATHY WILMOT: Sorry.

BLOOD: I know--

KATHY WILMOT: That's OK.

BLOOD: No, now you know what we go through every day.

KATHY WILMOT: I'm not talking English, evidently.

LINEHAN: No, nobody's--

BLOOD: It-- it's-- sincerely, it was about clarification because ultimately, as I've told everybody, these are not necessarily will-- where we are going to end up. But we can't do better if we don't have really good organic testimony, as opposed to people come down here robotic and say the same things over and over again.

KATHY WILMOT: Yeah.

BLOOD: This helps me.

KATHY WILMOT: Well--

BLOOD: Thank you so much.

KATHY WILMOT: Well, and to me, you know, from the people that I know that I sometimes have contact with, this whole area, this proposed on LB3, this whole area, we share so much in common. I mean not-- not just our school situations, sports, I mean agriculture. There's so much dryland and irrigation because we're a mix. In fact, if you look at Hayes County and Chase County, they've got some real dryland farming, just like we down-- do down in Furnas. And so the issues that we are concerned about, the issues we come down and talk to you

all about or we talk to our legislators about, that's what it's about.

BLOOD: And-- and I comprehend those concerns.

KATHY WILMOT: OK.

BLOOD: I actually grew up in rural Nebraska, so I know.

KATHY WILMOT: All right. Thanks.

BLOOD: All right.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Blood. Are there any other-- Senator Lathrop.

LATHROP: Can I just ask a couple of questions?

KATHY WILMOT: Sure.

LATHROP: Ms. Wilmot, how many NRDs are represented on the Republican River Valley?

KATHY WILMOT: Oh, boy, that'd be a better question for Senator Hughes, but I know we have at least two that I can think of. We have the--

LATHROP: It's Upper, Middle, and Lower, isn't it?

KATHY WILMOT: We have Lower. Yeah, we have Lower, and I'm not sure about Chase, for sure, where they are.

LATHROP: OK, so just to be clear, because now we're talking about the Republican River Valley as being something we need to form a district around, the regulation of water use and the river itself is done by the NRDs. Is that true?

KATHY WILMOT: That's my understanding.

LATHROP: OK. And since 2014 or '15, they're required to have a basin-wide plan, so they-- those three NRDs have to get together and decide how they're going to manage the river, right?

KATHY WILMOT: Um-hum.

LATHROP: That's not done by the legislators--

KATHY WILMOT: No.

LATHROP: --but by the NRDs.

KATHY WILMOT: Yeah.

LATHROP: OK, thank you.

KATHY WILMOT: Yes, and we feel like we're a little hurt down there because we got hit with moratoriums and everybody else got to keep going, but that's another issue.

LATHROP: It's-- there's a lot of challenges on that river, for sure.

KATHY WILMOT: That's another issue.

LATHROP: Thank you.

KATHY WILMOT: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Lathrop. Other questions from the committee? Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you. I just wanted to make a comment. Kathy, this doesn't-- this has nothing to do with you. Before the other senators leave, I'd just like to recognize the senators that did show up, besides the senators at this table, of Aguilar, Erdman, Friesen, Halloran, Hughes, Murman, and Williams. You've heard from quite a few of them, but we made a big effort to come down here and I'd like to thank those senators for showing up.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Lowe. Go ahead.

SHERRY VINTON: Good afternoon. Chairman Linehan and members of the Redistricting Committee. My name is Sherry Vinton, S-h-e-r-r-y V-i-n-t-o-n. I'm a rancher, along with my husband, Chris, near Whitman in Grant County. I also serve as first vice president of Farm Bureau, and I'm here today testifying on behalf of our 60,000 members. Nebraska Farm Bureau has been the voice of agriculture for the state's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities for more than a hundred years. It's with great passion and heritage that we promote, protect, and enrich Nebraska farm and ranch families and rural communities in this state. It is with this same passion that we believe it is in the best interest of all Nebraskans that the Nebraska Legislature adopts maps that preserve as many rural legislative seats as possible. Nebraska's economic foundation is agriculture. It's our state's largest industry, directly or indirectly generating one out of every four jobs in Nebraska. While the reach and economic importance of agriculture to the state is

massive and well documented, we know the vast majority of Nebraskans are now several generations removed from the day-to-day happenings on the farm and ranch. With that said, it's production agriculture at the farm gate which serves as the ignition point for the subsequent economic and job growth associated with Nebraska agriculture and the agribusinesses that help fill out the skylines of our state's largest population centers. Preserving the rural voice in the Nebraska Legislature doesn't just help rural Nebraska; it helps all of Nebraska. A Legislature without a viable rural voice is one that could effectively cut off its nose to spite its face when making policy decisions without having interest in a body that can share and reflect the needs of farm and ranch families and communities that both support and rely on them. As population trends continue to move from rural areas, it's vital for the state to make sure that rural issues continue to have a place of prominence in Nebraska political and policy circles. Without a healthy agriculture economy in rural Nebraska, the rest of the state will suffer, as we have seen happen on numerous occasions before. With that in mind, the maps presented each have strengths and weaknesses. Obviously, our preference leans towards maps that minimize any loss of rural representation in Congress and the Legislature. Simply put, we ask that our rural voice in Washington, D.C., and Lincoln be preserved as much as possible. On behalf of our members across the state, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify today, and once again I encourage you to protect our rural seats in the Legislature. And I would be happy to try and answer any questions you have.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Ms. Vinton. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Briese.

BRIESE: Thank you, Chairman Linehan. Thank you for your testimony here today, Ms. Vinton. So-- so I assume it's safe to assume that you oppose the elimination of LD44 in any way, shape, or form.

SHERRY VINTON: We don't want to lose any of our rural representation--

BRIESE: OK.

SHERRY VINTON: --or our rural districts.

BRIESE: OK, very good. And in your role, a vi-- as vice president of Farm Bureau, I assume you have traveled the state considerably, probably visited most counties, most legislative districts, and have a handle-- and really have a handle for what agriculture looks like

in most legislative districts and most areas of the state. Would that be true?

SHERRY VINTON: I believe I do.

BRIESE: OK, very good. If you were to look at agriculture in LD44, Senator Hughes's district, and compare that to, say, Sarpy County, agriculture in Sarpy County, you would see substantial differences, correct?

SHERRY VINTON: Correct.

BRIESE: OK. And if you looked at agriculture in the Seward/York area, LD24, would it look more similar to Sarpy County agriculture than does LD44 agriculture?

SHERRY VINTON: I would say it would be more similar. I would say the communities, the-- the communities of interest would have more similar cultures as well.

BRIESE: Sure.

SHERRY VINTON: I mean, as you move further west, just the geographic distances, the size of the schools, all those other things play into commonality.

BRIESE: OK, very good. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Briese. Other questions from the committee? Thank you very much for being here. Hi.

TRACY OVERSTREET: Good afternoon. Committee, thank you for coming to Grand Island. My name is Tracy Overstreet, T-r-a-c-y, Overstreet, O-v-e-r-s-t-r-e-e-t. I am the Hall County Election Commissioner. And I wasn't planning on giving any prepared remarks today, but in the testimony earlier from Ms. Helzer in the support of the LB4, the Wayne legislative plan, I felt compelled to come up and-- and speak to you about some of the concerns that I have about that plan. I met with-- with Senator Wayne prior to the hearing today. I think the plan has-- both plans have merit, as the previous speaker talked about. They both have pluses and minuses. The concerns I have with LB4 would be relative to what I think would be voter disenfranchisement and the inability to protect the secrecy of the vote based on the way the legislative lines are drawn in LB4. As you know, the legislative lines are the lines that we follow for setting precincts and then for selecting polling sites. After the 2020

Election, we had record voter turnout. I think that those voters, some voters haven't voted for a long time that came out and vote, and I hope that they will continue to vote in 2022 and 2024. The LB4 plan makes very substantive changes, not in Grand Island proper. I-- I concur completely with Ms. Helzer that keeping Grand Island mostly intact is a very good thing. But what it does to the fringe of Grand Island and to the rest of Hall County is very substantial. For example, it bisects school districts. The people that now are voting in Doniphan would-- about half of that district would be cut in half to go to vote in Wood River because it's a different legislative district. Likewise, the southeast corner of Grand Island would be lopped off and would no longer be able to vote in Grand Island, and they wouldn't even be able to vote in the next closest community, which is Alda. They would have to drive all the way to Wood River. They would be the only people in Wood River voting for Grand Island mayor, Grand Island sale-- sales tax issues. Additionally, the line, the legislative line under LB4 that used to be on 80th Road, has been moved four miles closer to Grand Island. It leaves very little room for having voters in the area that belong to the Northwest School District. So we will not be able to share precinct district results in future elections because literally in one census block, there's two people and one voter. We won't be able to cover that vote. If we re-- if we share the precinct results, it will expose how that voter voted. So I'm very concerned about voter disenfranchisement. I'm very concerned about, you know, the polling places moving and-- and-- and maintaining the secrecy of people's vote under LB4.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Morfeld.

MORFELD: Thank-- thank you, Chairwoman Linehan. Thank you for coming today. If you could, could you provide the committee with that specific kind of area and precinct? Because obviously, if there's two or three voters there, we want to make sure that we don't-- maintaining the secrecy of people's voting and ballot should be of the utmost--

TRACY OVERSTREET: if you look at LB4 and you look at the boundary line along Engelman Road--

MORFELD: OK.

TRACY OVERSTREET: --between 13th Street and-- Chad [PHONETIC], what's the next--

LINEHAN: You can-- you can get it to us.

TRACY OVERSTREET: Yeah, we will get that to you. But the-- it just makes everything so very tight.

MORFELD: Yeah.

TRACY OVERSTREET: And under LB3, I mean, that's not perfect either, but it's doable-- it's more doable--

MORFELD: It's a little bit doable? OK.

TRACY OVERSTREET: --for us, yes.

MORFELD: Yeah, if you could follow up with the committee with that specific area, that would be great. I guess the other question I have is I know that in some of the-- the urban areas, in Lincoln and Omaha in particular, there is consolidation of like precincts into one voting location for several precincts. Is that something you're able to do to make it so that some of these communities would still be able to-- even though they're in a different precinct because of the legislative lines, they'd be able to go vote in a--

TRACY OVERSTREET: OK, this-- yes. But we also struggle, unlike the urban areas, I think, have more opportunity for using public facilities for polling sites. So this is a-- actually, a letter that I had sent to Senator Linehan and the-- the committee about polling sites, and we lack a lot of-- of the public facilities that other places have. So I actually had asked for College Park or Central Community College to be drawn in another legislative district because currently the legislative line goes right down Highway 34, and really all of the good public facilities are on the north side of the road. So we lack public facilities between Highway 34 and the interstate, which is in another legislative district. We have Stuhr Museum that we could use. We have a rural fire house. We proposed using the museum in the past. We met with the Hall County Republican Party and Hall County--

MORFELD: But--

TRACY OVERSTREET: --Democratic Party, and they both objected to that because there's a gate house and we don't want voters to think that they have to pay to go vote.

MORFELD: OK, I-- I totally understand. I mean, even in some of these bigger-- this-- I-- I consider Grand Island an urban area, personally, but even in some of the bigger urban areas they have some of those same exact issues, so I definitely understand that. I guess

my question, though, is, is even if the legislative district line bisects the highway and the community colleges on one side of it, you'd still be able to have a different precinct from a different legislative district be a voting center for multiple precincts, wouldn't you? It wouldn't have to be in the legislative district.

TRACY OVERSTREET: We-- we can. Sometimes it takes a special-- the Secretary of State's Office has to sign off on it. I mean, as long as they're-- they-- to be in-- we're not supposed to have different legislative districts at the same precinct, even if it's a collo-- collocated precinct.

MORFELD: Oh, really?

TRACY OVERSTREET: Yes.

MORFELD: OK. Is that a-- is that a--

TRACY OVERSTREET: That's actually a violation of state law.

MORFELD: So it's state statute. OK.

TRACY OVERSTREET: It is a state statute.

MORFELD: Great, good to know. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Morfeld. Are there other questions from the committee?

TRACY OVERSTREET: Thank you.

LINEHAN: You should know that Senator Aguilar has brought this issue about the voting place to our attention several times. He's done a very good job.

TRACY OVERSTREET: I appreciate that, and I appreciate Senator Aguilar. We spoke before the meeting as well. So thank you so much.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Hi.

JASPER FANNING: Hello. Thank you, Senator Linehan and committee members. My name is Jasper Fanning, J-a-s-p-e-r Fan-- F-a-n-n-i-n-g. I happen to be the general manager of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District, so it's obvious that some of what I'm going to say has already been said, so I'll try and cut that out. But when I saw LB3 and LB4 maps and looked at those, I thought, my goodness, I live-- I live in Keith County, Nebraska, OK? I manage the Upper

Republican Natural Resources District, which is headquartered in Imperial in Chase County, Nebraska. So I drive through Perkins County. I can see how Perkins County and Keith County have some commonalities of-- of interests, community interests that are aligned and very similar. But Chase, Hayes-- [PHONE SOUNDS] that's a new one, and it's also a new phone. No wonder I don't know how to run it. But the Republican River Basin comments that they brought up-- were brought up earlier by-- by other testifiers, I agree with. Keeping-- keeping that area in one legislative district, especially now that we're-- we're far down the road from when Senator Lathrop was more involved in the Republican Basin, we now have solutions in place that-- that all three NRDs-- the Upper, Middle, and Lower-- are involved in and partner on and all of that stuff. And-- and-- and it's not huge whether we have one or two legislative districts that make that up, but certainly at-- at the time that we were going through some of those difficulties when we didn't have any leadership or any real solutions, it was one Nebraskan's success or one area of Nebraska's success at the detriment of another area of Nebraska. And depending on where-- whether you lived in the eastern end of the basin or the western end of the basin, there was that-- that conflict. We don't have that anymore. Now we're working together quite well. As you mentioned, we have basin-wide planning. But-- but from-- as an economist, where I come from is the region of kind of the economic regional hubs. And-- and Chase, Hayes, Dundy, and Hitchcock County are more aligned with Red Willow County and McCook. And-- and Ogallala is-- I mean, I live there, but it's really not an economic center of any sort, you know, other than maybe as-- as both of these maps put Perkins County there, there is some-- some common interest between Perkins County, but it doesn't make a lot of sense to put the southwest four boomeranged around into the Panhandle. There I-- I see some issues with-- with represent-- representation there. Those two areas are-- are quite a ways apart. You know, the-- the shortest distance to get between the two areas would actually be through Colorado and they just don't have that much in common. And-- and our family operation operates in-- in Dundy, Chase, and-- and Keith County, so, you know, I see those dissimilarities between-- between the areas. And I would encourage this committee to work towards the map in LB3 with respect to the Republican River Basin and southwest Nebraska, as opposed to what's offered in LB4, which combines part of Senator-- you know, really, Senator Erdman's district with the southwest four counties of Chase, Hayes, Dundy, and Hitchcock, and I-- I just don't think that's a good solution.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much. I'm sorry. Are there questions from the committee? OK.

LATHROP: All I wanted to do was say, great, I'm glad the basin-wide planning is working.

JASPER FANNING: It's a work in progress, but it's working well.

LATHROP: A work in progress-- well, it was never going to be easy.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Lathrop. Senator Wayne.

WAYNE: So I'm-- I'm-- since you are on the-- you're on the NRD board? Did I hear that?

JASPER FANNING: I'm the general manager--

WAYNE: OK.

JASPER FANNING: --of the Upper Republican NRD.

WAYNE: So clearly we have to move somebody and it's the question that I've been asking just people who are kind of either elected or kind of involved in different political subdivisions. If not there, then where? Where do we move somebody?

JASPER FANNING: Well, that's-- that's obviously ultimately this committee's recommendation. And-- and you don't-- I guess I-- I look at it as there's more than one way to solve this problem. And-- and the method that you've put forward, Senator Wayne, is to take a singular district in western Nebraska and move it clear across the state to extreme east Nebraska. The other option would be to systematically look at all of the districts and shift all of the boundaries in a manner that that meets the population standards that have to be met from west to east. And you're going to expand all of those districts. The-- the issues that the senators brought up themselves, you know, are real and-- and squares, in terms of legislative districts, are more efficient than long rectangles. But that doesn't always fit the other criteria, and-- and what I'm arguing for in the Republican Basin is a long rectangle, but it makes sense in that area, I think, because the Platte Valley and the communities in the Platte Valley relative to the communities in the Republican Value-- Valley have different economic situations, different economies that they-- that they're-- they're built on. Even though they're all around irrigated agriculture to some extent, there's just a lot more development and a lot more industry in-- in the Platte Basin than there is in-- in the Republican Basin and those result in different economies. But I-- personally, I think-- you know, you're asking for my opinion on that. I think a systematic

approach that-- that changed all of the districts or most of the districts somewhat from-- from west to east and expanded that to meet those challenges, rather than picking one district and plucking that out of the west, because ultimately when you-- when you take one district out of the west, you're still adjusting all of the boundaries of all of the other districts to-- to some extent to-- to adjust that population. So-- so just working from east to west or west to east, however you want to do it, and systematically making these western districts as-- as efficient as possible for those western senators, makes sense to me and ultimately you accomplish the same thing.

WAYNE: So this is, if I hear you, we're-- we're going to move everybody from west to east. But at some point, we're going to run into Cummings [SIC], Dodge, Saun-- Saunders County, Lancaster, Gage, and at some point we're still going to have to move a legislative seat into Sarpy County. So you'd rather have it be closer to Sarpy County than have it be from western?

JASPER FANNING: I think that makes more sense.

WAYNE: OK, thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Wayne. Are there other questions from the committee? Thank you, Mr. Fanning, for being here.

JASPER FANNING: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Hi.

SHARON BOHLING: Hi. My name is Sharon Bohling; it's S-h-a-r-o-n B-o-h-l-i-n-g, and I live in McCook. I watch you guys on television, so I consider you my friends. And like my friends back home, you are entitled to my thoughts and opinions, whether you ask for them or not. [LAUGHTER] So a few things that I want to say about-- I, of course, am in favor of keeping District 44 and Red Willow County and McCook as far west as possible, and a few of my reasons for that are, one, and this is in answer to Senator Lowe, people in southwest Nebraska consider that we have a unique and special culture and it takes a long time to build up that culture of trust with all the people that are out there. But we celebrate together, we console each other together and we work on projects together to solve our unique problems, and I would like to see that continue as much as possible in those western counties. Another thing I want you to know is that, yes, we are losing population, but that's most-- well, not mostly, not totally, but partly because of the obituaries. And we do have

young people that are moving back to our area that lots of them have come back to their own schools to teach. We have several that lot-- left for either coast and they came back when it was time to raise their families and started new businesses or bought established businesses in the area. And it's my hope and our hope in that district that someday those people that come back will be wanting to run for the Legislature, and we want to have that unique culture built up to support them when they do that. On either map, Red Willow County and McCook is included at-- and it's the largest county and has become a hub of that kind of district. So out of respect for the candidates or the representatives, if we keep that district there and leave Red Willow County in the middle of it, it will be easier for them to meet with their constituents since they're already coming to that area to shop, to buy parts, for cultural events and different things like that. So I think there are a few reasons why we should keep that district in the west and as far west as possible. On a more selfish reason, if Red Willow County is the western county, that puts my sister's county in the same district and we will cancel each other's votes. [LAUGHTER] On a-- on a different issue, I would also like to address briefly the other redistricting elephant, which is District 2, I believe. I've thought for a long time that one of the unique things-- the only way that Nebraska gets mentioned in national politics is either because we have a Unicameral or because we're one of the two states that allow splitting-- splitting the electoral votes. So in my opinion, to keep us on the radar, even just a little bit for the rest of the nation, I think we should preserve District 2 as much as possible so that we can continue to have that reputation. You're doing a thankless job, and thank you for the time that you've put into it.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much. Are there questions from the committee?

LATHROP: Just a simple one.

LINEHAN: OK.

LATHROP: So I'm looking at Red Willow County and it has 10,700 people in it, and all the neighboring counties are-- have a far less population. What's the population center in Red Willow?

SHARON BOHLING: McCook.

LATHROP: Oh, OK. It's not on the map that I'm looking at.

SHARON BOHLING: Correct.

LATHROP: That makes perfect sense. OK, thank you.

LINEHAN: Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you Chairman Lin-- Linehan. And thank you for coming today. And by the way, I was born in McCook--

SHARON BOHLING: Well--

BLOOD: --just so you know that. So I want to point out one of your issues. You have more females than males, and I think that's part of your population problem. [LAUGHTER] But on a different note--

SHARON BOHLING: I'll agree with that. I'm single. [LAUGHTER]

BLOOD: We-- we'll talk about that issue later. So-- so I want to-- I actually want to thank you. And-- and I'm going to kind of read something to you. And does this sound like true? Because you seem to know your numbers. I mean, what you said was there are a lot more younger people moving into your area. And it does look like about a fourth of the population in-- in that area is under the age of 18. And then we have another fourth, ages 25 to 44, and that your median age is around 40. Does that sound about right?

SHARON BOHLING: I do not know that.

BLOOD: I mean, that's kind of what you just said to me, so you can just say yes. All right. So-- so I just want to say that I do appreciate that you came in and you gave us-- one of the hardest things for a lot of people, like I-- I was born in McCook and raised in central Nebraska and now I live in urban Nebraska, so I know what Nebraska looks like, but not all urban senators have that benefit. So I just wanted to thank you for painting a picture of what your area looks like, because if you don't come in and tell us this is what's important to us, this is-- these are what my neighbors look like, this is my community and what it looks like, it makes it harder for us to do a good job. So I just wanted to say thank you for doing that. And thank you for the coffee.

BREWER: No problem.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Blood. Are there other questions from the committee?

SHARON BOHLING: OK, thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you very much for being here. Good afternoon.

ADAM JACOBS: Hi. My name is Adam Jacobs, A-d-a-m J-a-c-o-b-s. I live in Adams County. I differ a lot from the people who've come here today as I did not plan to speak earlier and I don't have an opinion on District 36, so-- but I noticed something as I've been looking at these maps and, being from Adams County and living outside of Hastings, I feel like I had to say something to represent the people of Adams County. I'd like to discuss the handling in LB3 of the city of Hastings and separating it from the rest of Adams County, just basically making it a vestigial appendage of southern Hall County. I feel that separating a ma-- the major city, one of the tri-cities-- I'm sure you're all familiar with that as we use it all the time around here-- from its hinterland, separating Hastings from its hinterland does a disservice both to the city of Hastings, separating it and keeping it even further separated from the rest of Adams County; and separating rural Adams County from its home, its hub in Ha-- in Hastings, does a disservice to both sets of people, does a disservice to the city of Hastings and all roughly 25,000 people there and to the rest of Adams County around it. It is the economic hub, it's the cultural hub, it is the educational hub of the region, and LB3 carves out just a little puzzle-piece nib and separates it from the rest of the county, and I feel that, like I've said, is a disservice to what is happening to the rest of the people in that area. I would also like to reiterate that legislative districts represent people, and I know I'm going to-- I'm going to not make some friends from people in the back, but it represents people and not cows and ears of corn. To follow constitutional guidelines, we must operate in good faith to represent the people-- people, not land, people-- so I'd just like to reiterate that. And I'm going to keep this nice and short, and that was it. I'd like to thank you all for your time. And I know-- I've seen this happen in other states. I know this is tough, tough work, so I'd like to thank you all for-- for doing this.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? But so you live in-- you live in Hastings?

ADAM JACOBS: I live outside of Hastings in Adams County.

LINEHAN: So in-- what school district are you in?

ADAM JACOBS: I live in Adams Central school district.

LINEHAN: So doesn't-- isn't Adams the city-- excuse me, the city of Hastings separated from Adams Central?

ADAM JACOBS: You are given the option.

LINEHAN: Yes, I know, like in--

ADAM JACOBS: So, like, I pay taxes to Adams Central school district.

LINEHAN: I know, but I'm talking about district lines. Isn't the Adams-- Central Adams--

ADAM JACOBS: Right.

LINEHAN: I'm getting my school districts confused.

ADAM JACOBS: Adams Central.

LINEHAN: --is com-- is carved out of the city of Hastings.

ADAM JACOBS: Yes. As far as I know, it surrounds, at least partially, the city of Hastings.

LINEHAN: It's almost-- encircles Hastings.

ADAM JACOBS: Right.

LINEHAN: OK.

ADAM JACOBS: But culturally and economically, that does not-- that line also does not hold, so educationally, for this educational system, partially holds true; economically, culturally, distinctively, it does not.

LINEHAN: OK, thank you. Other questions from the committee? Thank you for being here.

ADAM JACOBS: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Hello.

CHAD NABITY: Hello. My name is Chad Nabity, C-h-a-d N-a-b-i-t-y. I am the planning director here in Grand Island, in Hall County, and have been for the last 20 years. This is the third time that I have been involved in redistricting at the local level. And what I want to speak to you about is the importance of your work in reference to the importance of my work. We are on a short timeline, as you know, to get this all done. And normally we'd have started this back in April and we'd have been done with all of this by now, or it would have been going to the city council and the county board the first part of October, not a big deal. We're not there and we can't make any decisions on what we need to do until you've made your decisions,

because those legislative boundaries, wherever you decide to draw them, drive the precinct boundaries and the precinct boundaries drive city council ward boundaries and county board district boundaries. And we can't even get started until Tracy back there can have-- tell us where the precincts are going to be in Hall County. So please make decisions in a timely manner and blame it on me if you need to-- Chad said we had to make decisions, so we just made decisions-- so that we can move forward with what we need to do, because all of this is really very important and just absolutely has to be done. Now everything in Nebraska is moving east. Everything in Grand Island and Hall County is moving west. Our growth pattern is to northwest Grand Island. So you're going to move lines east, we're going to move lines west, and we're going to run into each other at some point and probably have some conflicts there that we're going to have to resolve, so we need information sooner rather than later. Thank you very much. That's all I had.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Yes, Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairwoman Linehan. And, Chad, I think it's been like three weeks since I saw you last maybe?

CHAD NABITY: I-- yes.

BLOOD: All right. It's nice to see you again. I just want to make sure that it's on the record correctly because I didn't hear it. You wear more than one hat, if I remember correctly.

CHAD NABITY: I wear a number of hats. I'm the planning director for the city of Grand Island and Hall County. I'm the CRA director for the city of Grand Island. I'm the floodplain administrator for all of the communities in the county. I work with a joint planning commission that serves all of the municipalities in the county, so-- and every ten years I also get tapped, because I'm the map guy, to work on redistricting. And maybe it's because, when I first started here 20 years ago, I didn't say no. But--

_____ : [INAUDIBLE]

CHAD NABITY: But that's kind of the way that works. So, yes, I do a number of things, so I am fitting this in amongst everything else that I do, and I have to do that because we have deadlines. And if we don't get this-- if city council doesn't get this approved before my-- the cruise my wife and I have planned in December [LAUGHTER]--

LINEHAN: You shouldn't have brought that up.

BLOOD: [INAUDIBLE]

CHAD NABITY: --I am a dead man, so--

BLOOD: I-- I--

CHAD NABITY: --please help me.

BLOOD: I appreciate that. I just wanted to make sure we got that on record. Thank you so much.

CHAD NABITY: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Blood. Other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here. Welcome.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is-- excuse me. My name is Yolanda Chávez Nuncio. I am from Grand Island, born and raised here. I have been active in my community in civic engagement for many years. I have taught citizenship classes for more than 20 years, I have done voter registration for more than 10 years, and I have worked with the election polls for several different elections. I believe in the power of the vote, recognizing voting as a right, a privilege, and a responsibility for every citizen. Redistricting-- redistricting impacts your voting rights. It imparts racial justice. It impacts key decisions in areas like criminal justice reform and educational equality-- equity. Redistricting belongs to all of us, and we all have a part to play because state senators are about to make decisions impacting our lives for the next ten years. Redistricting affects our daily lives more than we realize. The drawing of district lines can determine not only who runs for public office and who is elected, but also how financial resources are allocated for schools, hospitals, roads and more. Whatever our background, our community, Nebraskans believe every vote should count equally and we should all get our fair share. Redistricting is how we can make that happen. Redistricting, general description, are: a good redistricting process means fair representation; it affects what issues are handled and what issues are ignored; it leads to more openness and transparency; it requires districts to be drawn politically neutral without consideration of political affiliation, previous voting data, and voter demographics. Voters should choose representatives, not the other way around. I have been studying the maps developed by Senator Wayne and Senator Linehan. Senator Linehan's map cuts GI in half, splitting it between

two different legislative districts. This section of town is a part of GI and should be together with the rest of the city. It is also confusing to the community, especially new voters, to split the county. Many of the-- the citizens that will be voting in the next few elections are new citizens and many of them, this will be their first time as voters. It also pulls Hastings out from the rest of Adams County and includes it with one-half of GI. Hastings should be kept together and shouldn't be separated. It is a violation of the Nebraska Constitution to arbitrarily slice up counties to form voting districts. Senator Wayne's map attempts to respect county lines. Since GI's growth rate is due primarily to an inca-- increase in minority population, Senator Linehan's map is a pretty blatant attempt to decrease the clout of GI's minority population, which is largely Latino. In the map that is Senator Linehan's plan, an area on the east side of GI is being removed and added to another district. This area is within the city of Grand Island, where there is a high Latino population, as well as other people of color. Of the 24 communities that grew in the 2010s, 16 of them all-- got all of their growth-- growth from the increase in minority populations, meaning their white populations declined. That includes Hall, Platte, Madison, and Dodge Counties. As senators, you know you have the responsi-- responsibility to make sure that all citizens are represented equally by our leaders. Please do not make changes--

LINEHAN: Ma'am.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: --to the districts that discourages our people-of-color communities from using their rights to vote.

LINEHAN: Ma'am.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Yes.

LINEHAN: I need you to wrap up,

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: OK.

LINEHAN: I'm sorry.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: If I could just say one more thing?

LINEHAN: OK, one more thing.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Fair and equal representation is the cornerstone of American democracy. That's why we're asking for fair

maps that honor our communities. Thank you very much for your time. Thank you for allowing me to speak and for your work on this.

LINEHAN: You're welcome. There might be some questions. Is there any questions from the committee? Yes, Senator Lowe.

LOWE: I did not catch your last name. Could you please spell your last name for the record?

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Certainly. Chávez Nuncio, C-h-á-v-e-z N, as in "Nancy," u-n-c-i-o, no hyphen. OK?

LOWE: Thank you very much.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Thank you.

LINEHAN: So you just-- I appreciate your comments very much, and Senator Wayne and I will look at that. But I think Senator Wayne-- Grand Island is too big to be just one legislative district. You understand that we do have to take part of Grand Island. You're lucky in that sense. Most cities would love to trade places with you-- they were too big versus being too small-- but I think we'd both be willing to work with you on-- where-- because we don't-- that's why we're here today. We don't know where everybody lives.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: And I understand that, but I also-- Grand Island is 35th District. I live in the 34th District because I live in northwest Grand Island. So Senator Aguilar is not my senator. Senator Friesen is. And so I understand the-- the-- the outline and everything, but I think we have to be very select on how we-- you know, it could appear that we are splitting minority communities, people-of-color communities, splitting the vote by choosing certain sections of the community to-- to-- to withdraw from that district. And I think that one of the things is that with the area that has been cut out, it's the east-side area. There's a li-- excuse me. It is a large Latino population area, large new immigrants, new citizens in the community, and that will have an effect on our vote.

LINEHAN: Is that-- is that part in dis-- your district in the Grand Island district now?

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Yes, ma'am.

LINEHAN: It is, OK.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: It's my understanding it is, yes.

LINEHAN: OK. All right. Well, we'll look at all that--

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: OK. Thank you.

LINEHAN: --will we not?

WAYNE: Yep, we will.

LINEHAN: We will.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you for being here.

YOLANDA CHÁVEZ NUNCIO: You're welcome.

LINEHAN: Welcome.

JANE KLEEB: Hi, Senators. Jane Kleeb, chair of the Nebraska Democratic Party, also head of Bold Nebraska. So I'm here in support of Senator Wayne's maps. That should be no surprise to the committee or anybody watching. Senator Wayne's maps, we believe, are more fair not only to the urban legislative districts, but also the infamous "Joe-maha" blue dot. We also think that it is a lot more fair to the rural counties, and honestly that's one of the reasons why I wanted to come up and talk. At first I was going to make a joke saying I was going to talk on behalf of Legislative District 36, since lots of people seem to be doing that, but I think they have that ground covered. I did bring cookies. Since you guys are out in the 3rd District, we love our Eileen's Cookies in Hastings. They were founded there, in case you didn't know that. But when I went there, they only had five of these individual small ones. So I thought, well, maybe that's a sign because in your duties in redistricting, you're not all going to get exactly what you want and not everything is going to be kept whole. [LAUGHTER] So I'm going to leave Senator Wayne and Senator Linehan to distribute the cookies--

LINEHAN: Oh, great.

JANE KLEEB: --as they will and divide them up as they will.

_____ : Oh, boy.

JANE KLEEB: Oh, boy.

LINEHAN: Yeah. You're getting that.

JANE KLEEB: Oh, boy. But as an organizer, we really do organize by counties. And so the more that we can keep counties together, the better. Obviously, in our urban areas, that's not as possible as it-- as it is in our rural areas. So I do-- I did think that Senator Wayne's maps did a better justice in keeping rural counties whole than Senator Linehan's did. And I did just want to take this opportunity to say something because, as somebody who deeply cares about rural-- Scott and I live in Hastings. Despite what people think, we don't have a condo in Omaha, although with all the travel that I do, I sometimes wish that I did. If we're concerned about our rural areas and the land mass getting bigger and bigger every year, we need to be thinking about ways to keep young people in rural areas. There are several ways that we can do that. One, we can clean up water. In the situation that's facing Mead right now, a young family literally just left Mead to move to Omaha because they're terrified of the drinking water. We can protect property rights. More and more young farmers don't want to build farms and ranches out in rural Nebraska if a big corporation, whether that's an oil pipeline or a windmill, is going to come tell them how to use their land. We can give micro-loans to small businesses. The individual who came and speak and-- from McCook, we have a lot of young business owners that are creating businesses in Hastings, whether it's farm-to-table restaurants or microbreweries or all the things that keep young families wanting to be there and raise their families. We can give land back to the tribes, in particular the Ponca Nation. That would certainly be one way that we could bring more population to rural Nebraska. And lastly, since I'm out of time, it's not only rural senators who stand up for rural residents. In fact, one of the biggest issues that rural Nebraska was facing in the past decade was the Keystone XL pipeline. There was one senator who put up a bill to protect our property rights, and that was Senator Ernie Chambers, so sometimes our urban senators do better representing the issues that we deeply care about in rural. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Are there questions from the committee? I have one. Have you looked at Congressional District 2 under L-- under LB1 and figured out whether it would have been a blue dot last fall?

JANE KLEEB: Actually, yes.

LINEHAN: And what color would it have been last fall?

JANE KLEEB: The maps that you have presented are interesting because they provide a lot of opportunity for CD1, as well, for Democrats. So I am hoping that--

LINEHAN: But the question was--

JANE KLEEB: Yes, yes, it would be blue too.

LINEHAN: It would be blue.

JANE KLEEB: Yes.

LINEHAN: So whether you had Senator Wayne's map or Senator Linehan's map last election cycle, both would be blue.

JANE KLEEB: Yes, and I think it's important, though, to say this, that I can't imagine a congress-- CD2 cutting Douglas County--

LINEHAN: Are you from Douglas County?

JANE KLEEB: No, but I do a lot of organizing in Douglas County.

LINEHAN: OK.

JANE KLEEB: I do a lot of organizing across the state. I'm in my car lot.

LINEHAN: Do we have other questions from the committee?

MORFELD: I'm sorry, I-- I would like her to finish her statement--

LINEHAN: OK, that's fine.

MORFELD: --Chairwoman.

JANE KLEEB: Just saying there's a lot of communities that work shoulder to shoulder in Douglas County, and I think it would be very difficult for organizing, for voter education, to split that county up for the congressional district. And I understand it wasn't fair to Sarpy County to have a part of them sliced off as well. There could be perhaps very unique maps that would come up, but it wouldn't make anybody happy if you put all the three biggest counties in each of the congressional districts. So I am confident that this committee will get together, that there will be a third set of maps, because in the end, that's what we do as Nebraskans and that's what we do as a nonpartisan Unicameral.

WAYNE: For the record, I'm on a diet for the Kilimanjaro, so I am--

JANE KLEEB: [LAUGH] I'll just put them behind you. You guys can--

WAYNE: --I am not going to take the first bite to see--

LINEHAN: Well, I'm not. [LAUGHTER]

JANE KLEEB: Thank you, Senators.

LINEHAN: All right. Other questions? Thank you very much for being here, Ms. Kleeb.

JANE KLEEB: Thank you, Senator.

LINEHAN: Hello.

RICHARD CHILTON: Hello. My name is Richard Chilton, R-i-c-h-a-r-d C-h-i-l-t-o-n. And to set the tone and historic context, I'd like to quote from the second inaugural address of President Ulysses S. Grant, delivered March 4, 1873: And by a humane course, to bring the Aborigines in this country under the benign influence of education and civilization, it is either this or war of extermination. Wars of extermination, engaged in by people pursuing commerce and all industrial pursuits, are expensive, even against the weakest people, and are demoralizing and wicked. Our superior of strength and advantages of civilization should make us lenient towards the Indian. So when gubernatorial candidate and member of the Board of Regents Jim Pillen says that he's against critical ra-- race history, he's being very partisan. And we have serious issues to discuss in this country, such as the \$47.4 trillion that has been spent on wars and the preparations of wars at the federal level since 1947. But in 1835, in Democracy of [SIC] America, Alexis de Tocqueville wrote: Once a people begins to interfere with the voting qualification, one can be sure that sooner or later it will abolish it altogether. That is one of the most invariable rules of social behavior. The further the limit of voting rights is extended, the stronger is the need felt to spread them still wider, for after each new concession, the forces of democracy are strengthened and its demands increased with the augmented power. No, Senator Linehan, once the city of Omaha annexed the city of Elkhorn, the 6/38 interstate corridor is not a natural border. And when it was built, both I-48 and the once-designated 580, today's Highway 75, effectively destroyed the viability of the very tightly knit Indigenous and Negro communities north of downtown, off Dodge Street downtown. Regarding LB3, by it-- since I'm from Ro-- Rosalie, by including Rosalie in LD16, you are splitting the 1854 Treaty lands of the Omaha people. As senators, your partisan political behavior in recent winters has been arrogant, corrosive, out of touch with actuality, and disgraceful, and nearly all of you who follow Your Majesty's bidding need to be tarred and feathered. Stop playing with our votes through packing and cracking, gerrymandering, and earn them through honest governance. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions? Thank you. Are we done? Oh, no. That's-- [LAUGH] still a lot of people here.

SHERRY JONES: Yes.

LINEHAN: Good afternoon.

SHERRY JONES: Yes, thank you. First of all, please inform me if my understanding of the map is incorrect or I might need to ask you some questions about this. First of all-- oh, I'm Sherry Jones, from Grand Island, S-h-e-r-r-y J-o-n-e-s.

WAYNE: You can hold it if you need to.

SHERRY JONES: That's-- OK, it might be better for me. Thank you. I'm looking at this map and for some reason I understood that there is still eight--

LINEHAN: Which-- we can't-- I can't-- which map?

SHERRY JONES: That's the LB7 and LB8, it would be. And I don't-- I thought there was going to be-- am I just missing the 8th District? Am I-- am I missing that?

_____ : [INAUDIBLE]

SHERRY JONES: OK, thank you. I-- I thought I was-- OK, so would I be correct in saying-- because I don't want to say something incorrect here, would it be that four of the eight would be from the met-- metropolitan areas of Lincoln and Omaha?

LINEHAN: Do-- do we have a blow-up of that area of Douglas County in here?

_____ : Should be. You should have them district by district.

LINEHAN: Yeah, but not of them put together, not just of Douglas County like we do on the legislative maps, which is fine. I didn't ask for it. I mean, you know, I know you've been busy.

SHERRY JONES: I just wanted to make sure that--

LINEHAN: Yes, you're-- you're correct.

SHERRY JONES: --I would be correct that--

LINEHAN: I think that's correct. I don't-- I'm--

SHERRY JONES: --four of the eight would be from metropolitan areas. Am I--

LINEHAN: Right, because 3 comes in-- so 3 comes into Douglas County, 4 is in Douglas County, 2 comes into Douglas County-- what's the other number-- 8, 8, so 4-- excuse me, 3-- 2, 3, 4, and 8. Yeah, 3 does-- comes up.

WAYNE: Oh, so [INAUDIBLE]

SHERRY JONES: OK. Well, hopefully what I'm saying is correct then.

WAYNE: Yes, yes. It is correct.

LINEHAN: Yes, it is correct. It is correct.

SHERRY JONES: I just wanted to make sure that I would be. OK, so thank you. So I am addressing LB7 and LB8. The proposed State Board of Education and University Regents maps are of particular concern to me, as I am running for State Board of Education District 6. I believe the proposed maps need revision. And the possibility of having half of the Regents and State Board of Education representatives from, I should say, the metropolitan area does not provide adequate representation for rural Nebraska. I think-- I'm thinking of all the landowners of rural Nebraska who pay such a great amount of money in property taxes used to fund public education. And they pay this regardless of whether they get a crop off their land or an adequate price for their cattle which have grazed off their pastureland. These landowners need a voice in the education arena for which they provide so much funding. My father and brother, who are farmers, pay way more for public schools than I do as a city slicker or dweller, however you want to call-- whatever you want to call me. I would ask you to give them a voice at the-- at the State of Board of Education and University Regents' tables. Additionally, rural communities have unique educational needs which need to be fully presented and considered. I'm in doubt that this would happen if half of the representatives are from metropolitan areas. The State Board of Education must fairly represent the entire state. One proposal of which I've heard creates two positions--

LINEHAN: OK, I'm going to have to ask you to wrap up.

SHERRY JONES: OK. Well--

LINEHAN: I'll give you a little extra time because we had to stop, but not too much.

SHERRY JONES: So the last sentence I'll go with.

LINEHAN: OK.

SHERRY JONES: One proposal of which I've heard creates two positions in Douglas, one in rural Sarpy, and the fourth in rural Sarpy and eastern rural Nebraska, and I would support this. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Jones, right? It's right there.

SHERRY JONES: Yes. Yeah, Sherry Jones.

LINEHAN: Sherry. Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you very much for being here, Ms. Jones. Welcome.

BILL STARKEY: Thank you. My name is Bill Starkey. B-i-l-l S-t-a-r-k-e-y. I live in Hastings. I'm here to speak about the proposed redistricting of the State Board of Education and University Regents maps, the proposed congressional district maps, and the proposed legislative district maps. First, the school board map, I'll speak plainly. There are current members of the school board that do not deserve the people's trust, and I believe that we as conservatives should do everything in our power to make sure that leftists like board member Deb Neary never sees the light of elected office again. She and others have betrayed our trust by a conspiracy of socialists to try and push through a set of socialist values in the first drafts of the proposed health standards. This was evidenced by a Freedom of Information request that brought to light the shady underbelly of her efforts and is part of the official record of the school board meeting of September 3, 2021. Knowing that these leftists will not-- will stop at nothing to "California-ize" Nebraska, we should revisit the committee proposed map and redraw districts to show our strengths and not dilute our conservative message. I would propose that only two positions be allowed for Douglas, one for rural Sarpy, and a fourth in rural Sarpy, together with rural eastern Nebraska. Our state school board should represent all of Nebraska, not just Omaha. If you are west of Lincoln, you're underrepresented by these boards. All Nebraskans must have a voice in this. For the three con-- congressional district maps, I endorse Senator Linehan's proposed maps. It preserves the core of District 2 in Sarpy County and the city of Omaha. It makes more sense to divide the urban and rural parts of Sarpy than it does to split up the urban heart of Sarpy. Senator Wayne's proposed maps goes the way of Deb

Neary and is underhandedly forming District 2 into a permanently leftist district. For the proposed legislative dis-- district maps, I endorse Senator Linehan's map, which preserves the rural areas from dilution of their conservative values. On a personal note, I'd like to reference Senator Blood's comment about cookie-cutter responses from conservative groups and I would like to say, with all due respect, I'd like to ask the senator to remember-- to remember that the truth is always the truth and we should not be afraid to repeat it. In closing, there are more conservatives than there are leftists in Nebraska. Use our power to solidify our majority at every level. Being nice to the Deb Nearys of Nebraska is what got us to this point. We need to take our local communities in the state of Nebraska back from these socialists. Do not be afraid. Be firm. Do not relent. Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you. Are there questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for being here.

WAYNE: You got Senator Blood.

LINEHAN: Oh, wait. I'm sorry, Senator Blood. I'm--

BLOOD: Thank you.

LINEHAN: You gotta get--

BLOOD: It's-- his head's in the way.

WAYNE: And I'm-- and I'm sitting right here, too, and we're just kind of--

BLOOD: You make a bad window. Thank you, Chairman Linehan-- Chairperson Linehan. I actually am just going to say a clarification for the record. You quoted me as saying cookie-cutter, specifically conservative groups. I just want to say for the record, sir, I said cookie-cutter testimony, period, I-- I am not known to care about liberal, conservative, or any of those other silly labels, sir, and I want that clear for the record. My concern is that we have people that are told what to say and that is not organic testimony and does not help me, regardless of where you come from. And by the way, I was raised in Hastings. And so that is my concern. I want you to have a clear understanding that-- that I respect the fact that obviously you feel very strongly and you like to label yourself-- label yourself as conservative. I'm a Nebraskan. And what I'm trying to do up here today is to hear everybody's true organic voices, not the voice of special interest or party. So for the record, and this is nothing

against you, I just want to clarify that not once did I say conservative groups.

BILL STARKEY: Thank you.

LINEHAN: Thank you, Senator Blood. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here. Is there nobody else wanting to testify?

WAYNE: Is there any-- there's people outside listening. Can somebody check and see if any of them want to--

LINEHAN: Or not listening. [LAUGHTER] OK, in the normal process of hearings, Justin-- excuse me-- Senator Wayne and I would get up and close, but since we've got three days and this is kind of a rolling situation into tomorrow, do you have any closing comments, Senator Wayne?

WAYNE: Oh. Well, yeah, I do-- I think if those who are watching online and-- and those who are here, this is a process. Please-- there was a technology issue, but we all got emails that were forwarded to us. Please keep in contact. And when you do talk about the local issues, like some of the things are pointed out with Grand Island, and-- and even contact your senator for the local things, we're-- we're still in the process of getting feedback and that's what this is about. We have-- obviously have strong beliefs in our foundation of our maps, but I think they'll look different at some point, but it's going to be because of the feedback, so don't stop giving us feedback. Just today, if we leave the 3rd District, we're done talking to you all, I think it's important that you keep-- keep emailing, keep talking and keep calling, because it is a process.

LINEHAN: I would like to echo that, that it's a process and we're very-- I am, we all are, very, very grateful that you got here today and you took the time to participate. It's important to the process. And I would ask with anybody, whether it's election commissioner clerk from Grand Island or another woman who had concerns about exactly where those lines are, that is-- when I sit down and I'm working on Elkhorn, I know what neighborhoods I'm working with. And I'm sure when Senator Wayne is working on his district, he knows the neighborhoods. Senator Lathrop knows his neighborhoods. But we're a little-- but we don't know the whole state, so that feedback is critically helpful. I would just ask that if you could put it in writing, like what streets you're talking about, what neighborhoods, what precincts, that would be very helpful because it's a lot of little tiny census districts. They go from-- you can have a census district with 2 people to maybe 224 people, so you can imagine the

dots on the map that we have to match up. So the more granular, exact information you can give us on why a map needs to change, that will be extremely helpful to the committee. So thank you all for being here, very much. You were a great group, no outbursts. It was wonderful. Thank you.

_____ : [INAUDIBLE]

LINEHAN: Thank you.