

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

Transportation and Telecommunications Committee
April 07, 2014

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Transportation and Telecommunications met at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2014, in Room 1113 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Annette Dubas, Chairperson; Lydia Brasch; Galen Hadley; and Dan Watermeier. Senators absent: Charlie Janssen; Beau McCoy; John Murante; and Jim Smith, Vice Chairperson.

SENATOR DUBAS: Good afternoon and welcome to the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing, confirmation hearings today. Because of the shortness of time that we have, and I know our testifiers are on a schedule as well, I think we'll go ahead and get started. My name is Senator Annette Dubas; I'm the Chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. I'll introduce the senators that are here. To my far left we have Senator Lydia Brasch from Bancroft; then we have Senator Galen Hadley from Kearney. To my immediate left is Anne Hajek; she is the committee clerk; it is her duty to keep a record of everything that transpires during the hearing here today. To my immediate right is Joselyn Luedtke; she is the legal counsel for the committee. And then to my far right is Senator Dan Watermeier from Syracuse. We may have other senators who are joining us. We are in the waning days of the legislative session so lots of things going on, trying to finish up business and getting things taken up. So please don't be offended that we don't have the full group here with you today, and we'll see who ends up joining us. We'd like to introduce our page for the day. We're very fortunate to have a wonderful page program here at the Legislature and these young men and women help us out immensely in our committees, as well as up on the floor. So we have Scott Jasnoch; he is a student at UNK. He is a junior in political science. So thank you, Scott, for helping us out today. We just have two confirmation hearings today. And I've already talked to both gentlemen. We'll ask you to come forward and tell us a little bit about yourself and open it up for questions and then it will probably be over with after that. I will ask, as you come forward to testify, we have some white sheets on the table back there. You may have a green sheet if you've gotten something ahead of time; it's just your information to present to the committee clerk to help her with her recordkeeping. So if you could have that filled out when you come to the table, we would appreciate that. Same way if anybody wants to testify in support or in opposition or in the neutral capacity, if you would fill out those sheets. If you're here, you don't want to testify, but you would like to be on the record, we have a pink sheet on the table back by the door. You can put your information on that sheet and you will be a part of the record. I would ask that you silence your cell phones, again, so as to not interrupt with the recording equipment. And if you have any conversations, please take those out into the hallway. So with that we will move forward and begin our hearings. And we will start with Mr. John Krager; if you would come forward, please. And welcome.

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JOHN KRAGER III: Thank you. Glad to be here this afternoon. Again, it's John Krager, K-r-a-g-e-r, and it's III after the name. Just to give you a little information about myself. Native from Nebraska from Omaha; married, three girls. I am a civil engineer by trade; work for a civil engineering firm in Omaha, Nebraska. I guess that's kind of a quick synopsis. If somebody wants to know some more information I can let you know more, but here today for appointment to the State Board of Classifications. And if you have any questions, I'd be happy to answer any. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. Are there questions for Mr. Krager? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Krager, for your willingness to be appointed and serve on this commission. Is there something that you believe would be important moving forward? How do you see your role? Any changes? [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: You know, I've looked through the information that was provided me. I don't see any changes as far as the design information that was provided to me. I think just as a civil engineer, I just wanted to be a part of the board, just to maybe give my opinions on some of the design that comes through. I know there's also one- and six-year plans that also come through to the board for review. So it just gives me an opportunity to look through that information. It also gives me an opportunity to meet other communities within the state of Nebraska; work with other communities, NDOR, counties, and so on. So, I guess that was kind of my want to be a part of the board. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you. And we appreciate your willingness to serve in this capacity. [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

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

SENATOR DUBAS: Other questions? I would have maybe one or two for you. Of course your experience and understanding of an engineer is very important when we're talking about roads. Have you had a particular interest in roads or infrastructure...looking through your resume? [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: For about the first...or about 15 years of the time I've been a civil engineer, I've been doing land development projects which include, obviously, roadways, but sanitary sewers, storm sewers, storm drainage patterns, road patterns, whether they be in a residential-, commercial-type subdivision; or if that subdivision abuts a major roadway, so that's been my interest in the roadway patterns and roadway

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of...mostly the areas of Omaha. But I have done other residential designs in Wayne, Nebraska; Seward, Nebraska; Gretna and so on. So I've had some experience in different communities. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Were you familiar with the work of this board before you applied, or is this something that someone encouraged you to do, or...? [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: I was not familiar with the work of this board other than the design criteria for the roadways. So I was familiar with that because I used that with major roadways or arterial streets or whatnot within the communities I was working in. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. Well, I know before becoming a member of this committee, I wasn't really aware of this board as well, but I have certainly come to appreciate the expertise that this board brings to the Department of Roads and our infrastructure. And I think you have a lot to bring to this position and I know it will be valued. And this isn't one of those boards that probably gets a lot of attention out there, but it is really a very important one in the work that you do in conjunction with Department of Roads is very valuable. So I, too, am appreciative of your willingness to step up and serve in this capacity and hope you will find it a rewarding experience, and I know that you'll have a lot to bring to it. So thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Any other questions? Seeing none, all right. [CONFIRMATION]

JOHN KRAGER III: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: You're welcome. Is there anyone here who would like to testify in support of this nomination? Anyone in opposition? Anyone in the neutral? Seeing none, that will close the confirmation for Mr. John Krager. Again, we appreciate you coming and visiting with us today. We'll now move on to the next appointment, Mr. Terry Haack with the Nebraska Information Technology Commission. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Dubas and committee members. My name is Terry Haack, last name is spelled H-a-a-c-k. I'm here today for the NITC commission. A little bit of history on myself; started as a classroom teacher, high school science in a small school in Iowa. Went to Beatrice to coach and teach as well. Upon my arrival in Beatrice, I was hired to be a biology teacher and was told to get some computer education courses before I came. I was so happy in my two weeks of training to get my dog in a programming to wag his tail and blink as "no red" and "no red." That was the extent of my training before I got to Beatrice. At the time I arrived at Beatrice I was told I was teaching five computer classes and one biology class. I was the

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computer department. I moved from Beatrice to be an administrator in Elkhorn, where I was a high school principal for 12 years. And, currently, I'm the superintendent of schools for Bennington Public. I became familiar with the workings of the NITC as I was nominated and accepted that nomination for the Education Council, which is one of five subcouncils for the NITC. I've been on that since 2003. I've been one of the cochairs since 2007. Technology has taken a prominent role in education. There was a time when many thought that you could utilize technology solely as the means to educate children. Now is very understandable that technology is a tool for the education of children. And I think NITC plays a very prominent role in the education of children in this state, Pre-K-16, as well as many other facets of the life of Nebraska citizens. So I'm very honored to be nominated for the NITC Council. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. Thank you, Dr. Haack. Are there questions? Senator Hadley. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HADLEY: Thank you. Dr. Haack, I have served on this board for, I guess, a year and a half, two years, and I know how important the input we had from the educational components of the members. And I'm glad that you have an interest in this, because I think it's something important as we go around the state and see what's happening in schools so we, as a legislature, can figure out how we can help that occur. What do you see the most important thing with schools now in technology, if you could use kind of a broad brush across the state? [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Well, I think when you look at technology, there's kind of three components. There's one, the infrastructure; two, the actual hardware and the tools; and three, the training of teachers. When you look back at the...and I think the state has a very important role in the infrastructure. And there's really kind of three waves to that. One is the Omaha metro area and some of the access that they have. Two is Interstate-80 and some of the infrastructure that goes down that. And three is the rural beyond that. I think, you know, it's a very important role that the state plays to try to develop an equitable solution for infrastructure that allows access...equal access to technology for all students. And I think they have played a prominent role in that in relationship to Network Nebraska. And the growth of that, I think, has been tremendous and the cost has certainly lowered in the several years that I've been on the committee. And so I believe that is a component where the state of Nebraska can help the most. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HADLEY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Other questions? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: My first question is, will you pronounce your last name?
[CONFIRMATION]

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TERRY HAACK: Yes. It looks like "hack" (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: But it is "hawk" (phonetic). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: "Hawk" (phonetic), okay, very... [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: As Tom appropriately called it--the predator bird. And that is the way it is pronounced. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Well, good. Well, I missed that if you said it when you sat down, and I wanted to be sure because I wanted to thank you for your willingness to serve. And as you join this commission, I hold the commission itself in very high regards. Those who I have met and worked with for probably at least a decade, if not longer. Are there things that you would like to focus on? You know, what is over the horizon...over the cloud? [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Well, I don't think there's one thing in particular. I think, you know, in relationship to the use of technology by the citizens of Nebraska, it is important that the state keep an eye on equitable formats, equitable access. And as I've stated before, I think the infrastructure is the important key to that. Whether you use Samsung or Apple or Dell, I don't know that that's the important piece for the state. What I do think is important is to keep, you know, in mind that all people from birth to those that are in their retirement age can and should use technology to help aid their life in some way. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. When you mentioned the hardware use, do you believe that today's hardware environment offers interoperability between systems? You know, we are moving into a very data-driven age, if we're not already there, and are all systems now speaking to each other statewide? The schools may be linked at a way perhaps or... [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: I think they're getting better at that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Getting better. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: I don't know that they're completely there. But the interoperability...it used to be such that an Apple couldn't speak to an IBM or anything of that nature. I don't think the name on the outside of the device makes as much difference anymore. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: And then when it comes to the sizeability, when we look at difficulties with mass numbers of students or statewide...do you believe we're also at a point in time where because of cloud computing it's...that we can have 1.8 million Nebraskans log on at the same time and sign up for... [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Yeah, I think that's dependent. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: You're going to have a lot of streaming video that has become more prominent over the last several years, as opposed to just sharing data. And I think the other side of that is, not necessarily to look at the device or look at technology in itself, but look at the question. And can technology help provide a solution to what is perceived as a problem or what is a question? And sometimes technology can, sometimes it cannot. But if it can and if the state can make that more accessible for all citizens, I think that's where the state should be a partner. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: And one final question here; I appreciate all the thorough answers, is I serve District 16 which is all of Washington County, Burt County, and Cuming County... [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Yeah, a very good neighborhood. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Excellent. And some of Burt County just 40 miles, say, from Omaha, we have deserts of where there is no Internet access. And as I've talked with various vendors, there is a tremendous cost factor in delivering reliable, high-speed Internet to those business men and women and students that live in our rural communities. Do you see any potential solutions for that? [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Well, I do. The state has a savings account, if you will, that all of us pay on our phone bill, you know, we always pay whether we know it or not. And I think that has been there...Universal Service Fund, that could provide some opportunity, some help to vendors to provide some of those access points that rural areas are lacking. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. Thank you. I have no other questions. And thank you again for your willingness to serve on this commission. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: You bet. Thanks for the opportunity. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Other questions for Dr. Haack? I would just like to tell...I mean,

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obviously your professional experience...you really realize the importance of technology in the schools. And it looks like you've really taken on a leadership position in that respect, and similar to the questions that Senator Brasch asked, you know, the advances happen so fast, it's just so difficult for us to keep up. Maybe keeping even is the best we can do right now. Do you feel...do you feel we're keeping up to the best of our abilities? [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: I think we're always going to be behind. I think we're comfortable in that manner. But I think as you move forward, you ask the question--does technology help? And that's when you step in, provide the services, the tools that technology can utilize. So I don't know that...you know, in the world of education, that you have to make technology the focus. I think, again, as I've stated, you make technology a useful tool in educating children. So always being ahead or always being even, I don't know as that's an important part of, you know, the NITC council. It's asking the questions--can technology help in a question or a certain solution to a problem? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: I appreciate that answer, and I see the role of the NITC being even more and more important for the Legislature in the future because there are so many things...I mean we have a NextGen 9-1-1 study where we're going to have to go with that; how we use this technology in our schools. I mean, there's just not going to be an area in government or across our state that's not going to be impacted by the use of technology. So, as I said, I think the NITC is going to become even more relevant as legislators are trying to figure out funding and what do we need to do and all those other things. So I, too, appreciate you bringing your professionalism to this position and I think you'll be a great addition to the commission. So thank you for coming forward today, we appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Thank you, Senator. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Any other questions? Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

TERRY HAACK: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Is there anyone who would care to testify in support of Dr. Haack? Anyone in opposition? Anyone in the neutral? With that, that will close our hearing for today. And again, thank you for coming and visiting with us, we really appreciate it. And that will close our hearings for today and I would entertain a motion to go into an Executive Session. [CONFIRMATION]