

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee January 23, 2025
Rough Draft

SANDERS: [MALFUNCTION] and welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I am Senator Rita Sanders from Bellevue, representing District 45, and I serve here as the chair of this committee. The committee will take up bills in the order posted. The public hearing is your opportunity to be part of the legislative process and to express your position on the proposed legislation before us. If you are planning to testify today, please fill out one of the green testifier sheets that are on the table at the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill out the form completely. When it is your turn to come forward to testify, please give the testifier sheet to the page, to the-- and to the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify, but you'd like to indicate your position on a bill, there are also yellow sheets-- sign-in sheets in the back of the room at the table. These sheets will be included as an exhibit in your official hearing record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Tell us your name and spell your first and last name to ensure we have accurate records. We will begin each bill hearing today with the introducer's opening statement, followed by the proponent of the bill, then the opponents, and finally by anyone speaking in the neutral capacity. We will finish with a closing statement by the introducer if they wish to have one. We will be using a 3-minute light system for all testifiers. When you begin your testimony, the light on the table will be green. When the yellow light comes on, you will have 1 minute for the remaining of your time. And the red light indicates your time has ended. Questions from the committee may follow. Also, committee members may come up during the hearing, this has nothing to do with the importance of the bills heard. It is just part of the process as senators may have bills to introduce in other committees. A few final items to facilitate, facilitate today's hearing. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony, please bring up at least 12 copies and give them to the page. If you do not have enough copies, the page will make sufficient copies for you. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. You may see committee members using their electronic devices to access more information. Verbal outbursts or applause are not permitted in the hearing room. Such behavior may be a cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. Finally, committee procedures, for all committees, state that written position comments on a bill to be included in the record must be submitted by 8 a.m. the day of this hearing. The only acceptable method of submission is via the legislative website at

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nebraskalegislature.gov. Written positions will be included in the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included in the committee statement. I will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting on my right.

GUERECA: Dunixi Guereca, Legislative District 7, downtown and south Omaha.

J. CAVANAUGH: John Cavanaugh, District 9, midtown Omaha.

ANDERSEN: Good afternoon, I'm Bob Andersen, District 49, which is Sarpy County.

LONOWSKI: Dan Lonowski, District 33: Adams County, Kearney County, Phelps County.

WORDEKEMPER: Dave Wordekemper, District 15, Dodge County and western Douglas County.

McKEON: Dan McKeon, District 41, 8 counties in central Nebraska.

SANDERS: Thank you. Also, Senator Bob Andersen is the vice chair of the committee. And you may see me hand the gavel off to him. Also assisting the committee today to my right is our legal counsel, Dick Clark, and to my far left, committee clerk, Julie Condon. We have two pages with us today and I'll ask them to stand and introduce themselves.

RUBY KINZIE: I'm Ruby Kinzie.

SANDERS: Ruby, would you like to tell us where you're going to school and what you're majoring in?

RUBY KINZIE: I'm going to UNL and majoring in political science.

SANDERS: Thank you.

ARNAV RISHI: Hi, my name is Arnav. I'm a junior political science student at UNL.

SANDERS: Thank you. And I think we have Senator Hunt who is here now. I'll let her introduce herself.

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HUNT: Megan Hunt, District 8, in the northern part of midtown Omaha.

SANDERS: With that, we'll begin our hearing and our first testifier.
Good afternoon.

CLOUSE: Good afternoon, Senator Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Stan Clouse, S-t-a-n C-l-o-u-s-e. I represent District 37. The bill that I am presenting is bill, LB180, and that's at the request of the Department of Natural Resources. And the purpose of this bill is to harmonize language related to LB565, which is a bill passed in 2023 to adopt the Public Water and Natural Resources Project Contracting Act. And what this does is gives the Department of Natural Resources the authority to utilize alternative methods of contracting, including design build, progressive design build, or construction manager, general, general contractor contracting methods, primarily for large-scale projects. And these, these types of methods are pretty common. We're seeing a lot more in, in, in public situations. The act itself is modeled after separate but similar statutory tools already in place authorizing the Department of Transportation and the Game and Parks to utilize these alternative methods of contracting. And they're designed to improve the quality, speed, delivery times, and ultimately save money if they have alternative methods. The similar exceptions, again, are available through those different departments. And what this bill does is harmonizes the Department of Natural Resources at the same level or the same capacity as the Department of Transportation and Game and Parks. So, again, it's design build and it's not-- it's an option. It doesn't have to be an either or, but it gives them a flexibility as they're working through projects. So this just simply adds that act as an alternative delivery method for the Department of Natural Resources. Are there any questions?

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions for Senator Clouse?

CLOUSE: I would add we have some that will testify on this. And also we had one proponent that I'm aware of and, and no, no opponents or neutral.

SANDERS: Thank you. And will you stay for closing?

CLOUSE: If, if you need me to. Thank you.

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SANDERS: Thank you very much. We'll have proponents on LB180. Welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

ISABELLA PETERSON: Good afternoon, Chairwoman Sanders and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Isabella Peterson, I-s-a-b-e-l-l-a P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n, and I'm an attorney with the Department of Natural Resources. Thank you, Senator Clouse, for your introduction of LB180. As Senator Clouse said, the bill itself is rather simple. The purpose of this bill is to harmonize language related to a bill that was introduced at the request of Governor Pillen and passed in 2023, which was LB565, a bill to adopt the Public Water and Natural Resources Project Contracting Act, which was codified into law as Nebraska Revised Statute Sections 61-501 through 61-520. The act gave the Department of Natural Resources the authority to utilize alternative methods of project delivery, including design build, progressive design build, and construction manager, general contractor contracting methods for our public water and natural resources projects such as the Perkins County Canal Project. As a refresher, since the original bill was before the Natural Resources Committee, and there are many new faces here today, these alternative methods of project delivery afford the state both time and cost-saving opportunities through flexible contracting methods. These methods are well-suited for larger and more complex projects, often shortening the duration of construction periods and reducing costs. Such methods are already used on a variety of infrastructure projects, including roads, highways, bridges, rail, pipelines, canals, and dams. The act requires the department to publish detailed guidelines on the request for proposal process, including contractor qualifications, project scope, and standards for evaluating proposals in a work product. So to clarify, the department is not asking for such authorities today, since it has already been granted those authorities with the passage of LB565 in 2023. This session, we've asked Senator Clouse to introduce LB180 for the purpose of adding the act as an exception to those certain contracting-- standard contracting provisions found in Chapter 73, which would harmonize the act with other similar statutes of its kind, as Senator Clouse mentioned. Not including this language was simply an oversight when the bill was drafted 2 years ago, and such language should have been included at that time. Again, LB180 with cleanup language can harmonize the department's alternative contracting act with the rest of the state's alternative contracting acts to avoid potentially

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conflicting and duplicative provisions related to the department's use of such methods. I urge you to advance LB180 to General File, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony. We'll see if we have any questions from the committee. I see none. Thank you very much.

ISABELLA PETERSON: Thank you.

SANDERS: Easy. Are there any other proponents? Opponents? Good afternoon. Welcome.

ALLIE BUSH: Thank you. My name is Allie Bush, A-l-l-i-e B-u-s-h. I'm representing the grassroots group Nebraskans Against Government Overreach. We generally-- entirely understand wanting to streamline the process, harmonize, be efficient. That's, that's all well and good. Our point of being here today is to point out that the NRDs, and specifically Lower Platte NRD, which isn't specified in this, so it's important to bring up. It had a complaint filed against them for violating bidding on a water infrastructure project. The chair bid on it, along with several others in the community. And right then the chair said before they voted that if he got the bid, he would resign and he did resign before they took the vote. So he knew he was going to get it. This complaint was filed and the investigation is still ongoing. So if we're going to do anything that makes it easier for them to skip out on doing proper bidding practices, I would, I would put forth some hesitation about that. So we just wanted to put that in your guy's purview and do with that what you will. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony. We'll see if the committee has any questions. See none, thank you.

ALLIE BUSH: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you for the information. Are there any other opponents? Any in the neutral? See none, Senator Clouse, would you like to close?

CLOUSE: Yes. Thank you. And, again, I'd just like to emphasize that this was for the Department of Natural Resources, not the NRDs or any of those other groups, even though they may be in partnership. So this is just strictly for the Department of Natural Resources. And so I'd ask you to approve this as we move forward.

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SANDERS: Thank you. And position comments online is the summary of proponent, two; opponent, zero; neutral, zero. Thank you for your testimony.

CLOUSE: Thank you.

SANDERS: We'll move on to LB166. Senator Hughes. Welcome to the Government Committee.

HUGHES: I think this is the first time I've been to the Government Committee.

SANDERS: A lot of people have said that. Yeah.

HUGHES: Weird. I was going to say good morning, but good afternoon. All right. You ready?

SANDERS: Yes.

HUGHES: OK. Chair Sanders and members of Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, I am Jana Hughes, J-a-n-a H-u-g-h-e-s, and I represent District 24: Polk, Seward, York, and a little bit of western Butler County. I am here today to introduce LB166. This bill is a technical correction. Back in 2017, Senator Wishart introduced LB624, which allowed members of law enforcement to apply for their name, address, and parcel number of their property to be withheld by the county assessor and register of deeds for a period of 5 years. This law was later amended by Senator Brewer's bill, LB152, in 2019 to allow this to be extended to members of the National Guard. And again in 2022 for judges by Senator, Senator McCollister's bill, LB1178. These measures were put in place to protect members of law enforcement community, the National Guard, and our judges by allowing them, if they choose to apply, to have their home address-- addresses withheld from the public. Considering that these individuals who serve our communities and our states can be seen as targets for harassment and worse, this makes sense. There was one unintended loophole, loophole that exists that LB166 intends to fix. Since county treasurers are not currently required to comply with the statute, the addresses of members of law enforcement and the National Guard and judges are readily accessible by clicking on the treasurer online link on the county assessor's website for the listing of that property parcel. This is not the fault of our county, county treasurers, it was an innocent oversight when this legislation was crafted years ago. I'm

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going to keep it short and let those that are impacted by this law testify firsthand. I'd like to thank Sergeant Taylor Samek of the York County Sheriff's Office for bringing it to my attention last March. It was too late in the session then to bring a bill to fix this, and I'm committed to doing it this session. I'd like to thank him for being here to testify. And I'd recognize-- I'd like to recognize him for his service. The sergeant was recently recognized as the Employee of the Year for the York County Sheriff's Office for his outstanding efforts to field train new deputies, as well as protect the communi-- community by leading the department in alcohol and drug DUI arrests last year. I'd also like to mention that Corey Steel, the State Court Administrator of Nebraska, is here to testify on behalf of our judges. Thank you for your time and consideration.

SANDERS: Thank you. Let's see if there are any questions. Questions for Senator Hughes? See none, you'll stay for-- oh, we do. Senator Guereca.

GUERECA: So they, they can't look up by name. But if they-- so, like, there's a partial map and they can--

HUGHES: They can get there. Right.

GUERECA: --click on the plot that-- gotcha. OK.

HUGHES: OK.

SANDERS: Any other questions?

HUGHES: Oh.

SANDERS: Senator Wordekemper.

WORDEKEMPER: I guess to follow up on that. Would this also include, like Senator Guereca said, the parcel? I-- are we-- with this, are we also including if somebody clicks on the parcel that the people cannot get that information?

HUGHES: Right, because the parcel would tell you then you have to add that, Senator.

WORDEKEMPER: OK. All right.

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HUGHES: Is that what you mean?

WORDEKEMPER: Yes.

SANDERS: OK. See that there are no further questions.

WORDEKEMPER: Thank you.

HUGHES: OK. Yep.

SANDERS: Thank you. Will you stay for closing?

HUGHES: Yes, I will.

SANDERS: Thank you. We'll now open for proponents. Welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. Congratulations and thank you for your service.

TAYLOR SAMEK: Yeah, thank you very much. Chairwoman Sanders and members of the committee, my name is Taylor Samek, T-a-y-l-o-r S-a-m-e-k, and I'm a sergeant with the York County Sheriff's Office. And I've been in law enforcement in Nebraska for nearly 10 years. My wife, Lacy, also serves as a police officer for the city of Seward and has been in law enforcement for 11 years. My wife and I take a lot of pride in our jobs and in making our community safe. I'm here today to testify in support of LB166 as it directly affects my fellow law enforcement officers and our families. Nebraska Revised Statute 23-3211 allows for law enforcement officers, judges, and members of the Nebraska National Guard to have their residential address withheld by the county assessor and the Register of Deeds. This is something that many law enforcement officers I know have taken advantage of, given the nature of our work and the risk associated with it. Last year, I noticed that many counties in York, or excuse me, many counties in Nebraska, including York, have started linking their assessor and treasure records together. This has caused a loophole in the system as although my address is withheld by the county assessor, all someone has to do is click on the property tax link from the treasurer on the assessor's website or run my, run my name through one of the county treasurer's online platforms and they're able to access the information that's supposed to be withheld by state statute. Unfortunately, this is allowed because the county treasurer is not mandated to withhold this information like the assessor is. The passage of LB166 would fix this issue. Obviously, this is concerning,

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and in speaking from experience, there's nothing more unsettling than someone you've arrested knowing where your family resides. As a law enforcement officer, I know the countless risks associated with my job both on and off duty. However, my home is one place where I can let my guard down and relax. Without the passage of LB166, there is a way for those with ill intentions to bring those risks to my front doorstep. I'm sure that the dangers of law enforcement are something that this committee is aware of, but I think the following statistics speak volumes to the day and age that we are living in and the risks associated with being a law enforcement officer. According to the FBI, in 2023, which were the most recent statistics that I could find, assaults on officers were at a 10-year high as more than 79,000 law enforcement officers were assaulted nationwide, assaults on law enforcement involving firearms were at the highest level seen in a decade. I would ask for your support in the passage of LB166. As simply put, it protects those who protect Nebraska. I appreciate your time today, and thank you for your consideration on this matter. I'd also like to thank Senator Hughes for introducing this bill, which supports law enforcement officers across Nebraska. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you, Sergeant Samek . We'll see if the committee has any questions. Any questions? Ooh, easy.

TAYLOR SAMEK: All right. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you very much. Are there any other proponents? Welcome.

COREY STEEL: Thank you, Chairwoman Sanders, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

SANDERS: Hold on just a second. The green sheet.

COREY STEEL: Oh, yes.

SANDERS: Oh, perfect. Thank you.

COREY STEEL: My name is Corey Steel, C-o-r-e-y S-t-e-e-l, and I'm the Nebraska State Court Administrator. I want to thank Senator Hughes for bringing forward LB166. You will also see a bill coming forward, LB334, that has similar requests in it for securing addresses for the judiciary. We've worked hard in the, in the judicial branch to take threats to our judiciary seriously. We have all seen nationally what has taken place as recent as 2 years ago in Baltimore, Maryland, where

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a judge was shot and killed out in front of his home. We know there's been a federal judge whose family that was killed, unfortunately, at her home. It is important to us to secure judicial addresses. That's why we worked hard in 2022 to get judges included in this bill. And we are also working towards making confidential judicial addresses on retention ballots with the Secretary of State's Office. You will see that bill coming as well. One of the things we've implemented in the judicial branch is delete me, where all judges have access to scrub the Internet of all of their address and personal information for them and their family members. It's important to keep that information away from those that they make decisions on each and every day. Our judiciary make decisions each and every day that are life changing for some individuals. Senator Cavanaugh, can attest to this as being in a courtroom for some time. Not everybody is happy with the decisions that get made by a judge, but they need to be made. I have three quick examples of Nebraska where this has become a problem, most recently over just this Christmas, one of our judges called and had-- he's engaged in what currently can take place at the county level, and he's engaged in our delete me Internet scrubbing of his confidential information. He received a Christmas card in the mail. The Christmas card was on a-- was from a mother or from a wife of a defendant in a case that he just sentenced the week before to some serious long time chastising him for the fact that he took their child's father away, his-- her husband away, and what have you. Come to find out, he was up for judicial, judicial retention this last go round. And that's where we believe that individual had received the information of his address. Another example would be, we had a judge that was going through a court process and had a hold on an individual for a serious felony offense in jail. In jail, he had put a hit out on this particular judge and knew exactly her address. And luckily through the Department of Corrections, they were able to screen that, have State Patrol act in the, the manner of, yes, we would put a hit on that judge. And he told the State Patrolman on the other end of the line, this is where that judge lives. These are examples in Nebraska. I have many more that I could give to you, but I see my time is out. We fully support this initiative and we want to do everything to keep our judges safe. I'd be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Steel, for your testimony and for your service as well. Are there any questions? Senator Cavanaugh.

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J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here, Mr. Steel. Does this apply to spouses as well, or how does that work?

COREY STEEL: So this bill, you mean?

J. CAVANAUGH: Right. So if a judge goes to take himself off, will it just be their name [INAUDIBLE]?

COREY STEEL: Correct. I believe when they, when they petition it, it's, it's the property and who owns that property. So if it's joint, I believe it would be eliminated as well and the, and the same as what we're doing on the other, other avenues that we have because we know that there's other avenues. If you know a child or you know the spouse, there's, there's ways. So I, I believe this is the-- it identifies their property and that is what is eliminated.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Are there any other questions? See none, thank you--

COREY STEEL: Thank you very much.

SANDERS: --for your testimony. Are there any other proponents? Welcome to the Government Committee.

TIM HRUZA: Good afternoon, Chair Sanders, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Tim Hruza. Last name is spelled H-r-u-z-a. I'm appearing today on behalf of the Nebraska State Bar Association, the Nebraska District Court Judges Association, and the State Troopers Association of Nebraska in support of the bill. Definitely want to thank Senator Hughes for introducing it. This is one of those oversights or, you know, misses that we've-- we missed years ago as we've kind of worked through this process of dealing with these addresses and, and not catching the treasurer's office in the statute. I've appeared before this committee the last couple of times that we've expanded it for various reasons. The only things that I would point out and I've got similar stories to what Mr. Steel gave where judges have been threatened. I know I got a note last night from a judge who had a defendant state their address on the record during the sentencing in court. So we've had, we've had some really scary moments. And I think that it's a good idea to do this. The only thing I would highlight for the committee as we've gone

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through this process over the years, we are not trying to keep the information from being available. You can, the very first line of this bill, you'll see in its unchanged language, you can request in writing any of the information in terms of concerns about it being publicly available with regard to who's paying what in property taxes. I know sometimes it has come up on the Register of Deeds side when we ran that bill before about trying to hide information from the public. And I don't think that's necessarily the real aim here. At the end of the day, I know the people can find me and people are going to. Mr. Steel mentioned some of the services that they use to help protect judges, but from a law enforcement officer standpoint, from a judges standpoint, anything that helps, helps somebody cool off, right, before they make a bad decision. Going in and requesting and writing that information adds a little bit of a barrier to the ease of access that we think is an important step. And I, I think we've got some examples of where that's happened, and it's been helpful in kind of cooling things off at some point in time. So with that, I'm, I'm happy to answer any questions. I thank the committee, I thank Senator Hughes, and thank you for your time.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions for Mr. Hruza? See none.

TIM HRUZA: Thank you.

SANDERS: Well done. Thank you. Are there any other proponents? Any opponents? In the neutral? Welcome to the Government Committee.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Good afternoon. My name is Candace Meredith, C-a-n-d-a-c-e M-e-r-e-d-i-t-h, and I am the deputy director at the Nebraska Association of County Officials, otherwise known as NACO. We are here in the neutral position on LB166. And thank you to Senator Hughes for bringing this to the committee's attention. Of course, you know, transparency of public records is very important. And as Mr. Hruza did say, there is methods that are provided for folks to get that information, especially when it comes to elected officials. That's always been a sensitive issue that we should have access to those records. However, these groups that have been mentioned in LB166, there has-- there is definitely a vulnerability that they have to searches of a malicious intent and it doesn't stop there. We obviously know there's other groups, of course, we've heard about in previous hearings before. So the reduction of the parcel from the

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websites is pretty much a natural transition. The assessors already have it on there, of course, the Register of Deeds. And as was mentioned, a lot of these programs are linked from one point to the other because it's a part of the process. So Register of Deeds files, assessors value, the assessors give that information to the treasurer to collect those taxes. So it is the natural progression of the process. The only thing that was brought up today in our board meeting that we had when we were taking positions was unfortunately this, we call it, I always like to call it the Google machine. There's a-- when you Google somebody's name, unfortunately, this is maybe slow it down a little bit, but especially with elected officials, those names and addresses are all over the place beyond any sort of government records, so. But, again, understand this cleanup is a necessary.

SANDERS: Thank you for your testimony.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Yes.

SANDERS: Let's see if there are any questions for you. Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here. So I just had some, like, procedural questions. This just requires a filing with the county assessor so that they give it to the treasurer?

CANDACE MEREDITH: Yeah. So it'd be going forward because, you know, the records are there and, obviously, you know, a treasurer works a year behind so records change all the time. So I would say if once this-- if this became into effect, the assessor would receive the application as written in here and then they would make the notification to the Register of Deeds and to the treasurer. So that would all flow through it that way. So there would have to be a, a contact chain.

J. CAVANAUGH: And then I'm a big fan of the Douglas County Assessor's website and so it's got the GIS mapping where you can click on a parcel. So I know I can search by my name and if I search a judge's name, we'll say, then nothing will come up. But what if I know where they live and I click on that parcel, what comes up?

CANDACE MEREDITH: My understanding is the residential address is, is supposed to be withheld. So if the application-- if a judge puts the

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application in, the, the name and address will be withheld is how I'm reading the current language.

J. CAVANAUGH: So-- but I mean, like the-- I mean, I don't know, I don't spend a lot of time on other assessor's websites, but Douglas County has particular parcels where you just click on the one parcel and it gives you the whole breakdown of the property, who owns it, transactions on it, things like that.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Is that a specific office or is there, is there a GIS? I'm not sure. I'll have to take a look at if it's a--

J. CAVANAUGH: It's a-- well, it's douglascountyassessor.org.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Douglas County Assessor.

J. CAVANAUGH: I think is the website that I spend a lot of time on.

CANDACE MEREDITH: And I do believe--

J. CAVANAUGH: Sarpy is the same.

CANDACE MEREDITH: And Sarpy is the same.

J. CAVANAUGH: But I guess my question is, if-- I'm, I'm just more wondering, like if I know they live on this block and I go through the parcels will it populate in that or will that one be--

CANDACE MEREDITH: I would have to confirm if the GIS, like model, if the house or the block is like-- has an unknown in it or if it shows the record. I have known, and again my prior life was at the Lancaster County Treasurer's Office, and, and this was implemented quite a while ago as Senator Hughes mentioned. There is a 5-year turnover, so they do need to apply every 5 years. So there is sometimes a lapse too. So when somebody does apply that would lapse if they forgot to go back in and do it. So I know I've seen-- I've heard of that before as well. But I can check on that Douglas and Sarpy and just see how that ties. I'm not familiar with Douglas and Sarpy as I am the other counties.

J. CAVANAUGH: They're great websites.

CANDACE MEREDITH: They are very intuitive.

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J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Senator McKeon.

McKEON: Question about that, would that just go back to the residence? That's it-- like if they-- if somebody owned other property?

CANDACE MEREDITH: It's the residence.

McKEON: It'd just be-- just for the residence only.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Yes.

McKEON: OK.

CANDACE MEREDITH: So if they probably had multiple properties because it does say--

McKEON: Or business, or business.

CANDACE MEREDITH: --residential. Yeah. So if they had a business, I don't believe that would apply because it's does say public to the residential address if they're--

McKEON: OK.

CANDACE MEREDITH: --law enforcement.

SANDERS: Any other questions? See none, thank you for your testimony.

CANDACE MEREDITH: Thank you.

SANDERS: Are there others in the neutral? Welcome to the Government Committee.

MEG WEBER: Thank you. Good afternoon, senators. My name is Meg Weber, M-e-g W-e-b-e-r. I'm a constituent of Legislative District 29. I'm here today to speak in a neutral capacity for LB166. I am a survivor of domestic abuse. My abuser, my ex-husband is a dangerous person. And after our divorce, he went on to become a convicted felon, sentenced to 3 years in Nebraska Corrections. While incarcerated, he was easily able to find my home address on the Lancaster County Property Assessor's website and contact me. I made the decision to move again, and this time engaged an attorney to determine how I could buy my home

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and protect my location from my abuser. I was shocked to learn that there is no protection like this available to domestic violence survivors in Nebraska. I could have set up an LLC to buy my home, but this would have created very unfavorable, unfavorable lending conditions compared to a standard mortgage. I could buy my home using a trust, but was informed that the name of my trust has to have some element of my legal name and my identity as the primary trustee would still be listed on the assessor's website. I recognized that I had the means to consult an attorney and bear the cost of setting up either an LLC or a trust to buy my home while many other domestic violence survivors do not and that many domestic violence survivors who would like to buy a home in Nebraska will not do so for fear that their abusers can easily locate them with a simple search of the county assessor's website. I ask today that you consider amending the current LB166 to include domestic violence and domestic abuse survivors as a protected party who can apply to have their residential address publicly withheld by the county assessor, the County Register of Deeds, and the county treasurer. If this is not the appropriate piece of legislation to amend, I ask that you consider introducing new legislation that protects domestic violence and domestic abuse survivors and their families in this way. Thank you for listening.

SANDERS: Thank you, Ms. Weber, for your emotional, heartfelt testimony today. Let's see if the committee has any questions. Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms. Weber, for being here and really sorry about what's happened to you. Do you happen to know if other states have a similar mechanism?

MEG WEBER: I do not know. When I consulted my attorney on this, they didn't provide me with that information. They really just were very generous in helping me try to figure out any avenues that I had. And, unfortunately, we weren't able to find one.

J. CAVANAUGH: Well, appreciate you being here, hadn't, hadn't thought about it, so.

MEG WEBER: Yeah, yeah. I'm, I'm simply--

J. CAVANAUGH: It's valuable testimony.

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MEG WEBER: --hoping to bring awareness. Yeah.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you. Are there others? I see no other questions.

MEG WEBER: Thank you.

SANDERS: Thank you very much. Are there any other in the neutral? See none, Senator Hughes, would you like to close? While you're coming up, position comments for today's hearing record: proponent, two; opponent, one; and zero in the neutral.

HUGHES: OK. Thank you, Chairman Sanders and members of the committee for your time. I just wanted to address Senator Cavanaugh's question. If you-- if something was like that, you'd click on that parcel and then it would show taxes paid and whatnot, but the name would just be blank. As far as Ms. Weber, she'd called our office just prior to this. We haven't changed anything. I don't know if this is the proper bill for it. I would be supportive of something like that. But I'm going to leave that up into the Government hands of you guys to handle. If, if, if we need to bring something separate next year, you know, willing to work on that, too, so. Anyway, I appreciate those that, that-- everybody that came to testify. I look forward to LB166 being reported to General File for further consideration. I think we need to do our part to help protect the people that protect us. So thank you for your time.

SANDERS: Thank you, Senator Hughes. Let's just double check to make sure we don't have any other last minute questions. Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Madam Chair. Senator Hughes, it was referenced about it only being about residences. Is there already consideration to actually including businesses and, and other parcels? I mean, if somebody is trying to give-- to find somebody they could find through their place of business as opposed to just at their house.

HUGHES: Right. We could give consideration to that. We definitely could. Yeah. And you are correct. Right now the bill is written-- so like my husband has Hughes Brothers Manufacturing, if I was part of that, it would only protect our home residence, the Hughes Brothers location and the manufacturing company would still come up.

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ANDERSEN: Right.

HUGHES: I-- that would probably be harder to block. I don't know. That's something to consider.

ANDERSEN: I think it's hard to block anything nowadays with--

HUGHES: Well, isn't that the truth.

ANDERSEN: --Google machine out there.

HUGHES: Right. Yes. Right. That is so true.

SANDERS: Are there any other questions? OK.

HUGHES: All right. Thank you, guys. Appreciate it.

SANDERS: Thank you very much for bringing LB166 to us. Will now pass the gavel to Senator Andersen.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. We'll transition to LB59.

SANDERS: Oh, my God, I'm, like, sinking into the chair. Sit on the edge.

ANDERSEN: Senator Sanders, welcome to the committee, to your committee.

SANDERS: Thank you. My name is Rita Sanders, R-i-t-a S-a-n-d-e-r-s, representing Legislative District 45, which encompasses much of Bellevue and the Offutt community. Thank you, Vice Chair Andersen, members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm here to introduce LB59, which would update the methods that natural resources districts are allowed to use to disburse funds. This bill is very simple. NRDs are currently using-- only allowed to use paper checks or warrants to disburse-- to disburse funds. The changes I have proposed in LB59 would also allow them to use electronic funds transfers known as EFT and automated clearinghouse payments as ACH. This update simply allows NRD to use these more efficient, more secure payment methods that are now commonplace for both private and public transactions across the country. Mike Sousek from the Lower Platte South NRD will follow me to further explain the bill and answer any questions that you may have.

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ANDERSEN: Thank you, Senator Sanders, for your testimony. Are there any questions for Senator Sanders? Thank you, Chair. Are you staying for closing?

SANDERS: Yes.

ANDERSEN: Thank you. Are there any proponents of LB59? Welcome.

MIKE SOUSEK: Vice Chair Andersen and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Mike Sousek, M-i-k-e S-o-u-s-e-k. And I am the general manager of the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District. Today, I am presenting testimony in support of LB59 on behalf of the Lower Platte South NRD and the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. Our district office is located in Lincoln, Nebraska, and we serve portions of 6 counties in eastern Nebraska. The Association of Research Districts represents all 23 NRDs in the state. First, I would like to thank the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee for allowing me to testify this afternoon on LB59. I'd also like to thank Senator Sanders for introducing LB59 to the Legislature. When the legislation for the creation of Natural Resources Districts was written, the digital platforms we rely on today did not exist, and your predecessors could not have anticipated the business practices in place by 2025. In light of this, the Lower Platte South NRD proposes amending the statutes to allow all NRDs in the state to use-- utilize electronic platforms for financial transactions. With the passage of LB59, the Lower Platte South NRD expects to save over \$2,000 annually on printer ink, checks, envelopes, and postage. Additional savings will come from avoiding finance and late fees due to postal delays. This change will also reduce staff time spent on printing and mailing checks and an expense not reflected in these savings. Overall, it will improve operational efficiency, streamline payments, and enhance customer satisfaction as many have requested this preferred payment method for faster payment delivery. I'm here today to request that this committee, along with the Nebraska Legislature, consider this legislation to help districts adopt modern business practices for the benefit of all. I would like to-- I would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have. And once again, thank you for this opportunity.

ANDERSEN: Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions for Mr. Sousek? Senator Cavanaugh.

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J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Vice Chair. I got to ask, how many checks are you writing that you're going to spend \$2,000 in ink and postage?

MIKE SOUSEK: Well, enough that I had to purchase a stamp so I don't have to physically sign them. There, there are a lot every month. Easily, easily 100 a month, if not more. Some months are, are-- there's a big stack.

J. CAVANAUGH: Wow.

MIKE SOUSEK: We, we do a lot of, we do a lot of work, a lot of good work and that takes money. And distributing of that takes time.

J. CAVANAUGH: Yeah. And so you'll be able to change everybody over to this or--

MIKE SOUSEK: Yeah, I think actually some districts may already be using this. Sometimes the electric bill comes in and it's due tomorrow so you, you, you make the payment to avoid fees. But as we were looking at contractors requesting large amounts of money to be electronically transferred, we just happened to ask a lawyer and this all came about. We don't even have permission to do this so here we are.

J. CAVANAUGH: Well, welcome to the 20th, 20th century.

MIKE SOUSEK: Yeah. Thank you. Thank you.

ANDERSEN: Thank you. Are there any other questions for Mr. Sousek?

McKEON: So is that going to be all the NRDs or just your NRD?

MIKE SOUSEK: It's, it's for all the NRDs.

McKEON: OK.

MIKE SOUSEK: Yes. Whether they participate in it or not is, is up to each district. Check writing I don't believe is going to go away, but there are a lot of opportunities to do-- use electronic platforms.

McKEON: And that was going to be my next question about do-- would they have the option to still have checks?

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MIKE SOUSEK: Oh, yes. Yes. That's not going away.

McKEON: OK. I didn't know if you're going to end up doing all electronic, so.

MIKE SOUSEK: I'm going to do as much as I can.

McKEON: Right.

MIKE SOUSEK: That is the most efficient way to do business. But there are people that still like that physical check.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Senator McKeon. Senator Lonowski.

LONOWSKI: Thank you, Vice Chair. I don't think there's going to be any opponent so I just want to ask you, do you see a downside to this?

MIKE SOUSEK: I was, I was really trying to find the angle for the downside and, and I can't other than--

LONOWSKI: OK.

MIKE SOUSEK: --normal, you know, hacking, common things that are already out there on the-- in the cyber realm. But right now we, we mail checks to different states and we have fraud. We have fraud with that. People get the mail that doesn't belong to them and they try to cash the checks or I'm not here to complain about the Postal Service, but 15, 20 days from the time you mail it, you get stuck with finance charges and you're arguing with businesses like this was mailed on this day, trying to avoid a lot of that, too.

LONOWSKI: OK. Thank you.

ANDERSEN: Any other questions for Mr. Sousek? Thank you for your testimony.

MIKE SOUSEK: Thank you.

ANDERSEN: Are there any other proponents? Seeing none, are there any opponents to LB59? Seeing none, are there any neutral views? Seeing none, Senator Sanders, before you close, the online, there are-- there was one opponent, zero opponents, and zero neutral commentary.

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SANDERS: Thank you.

ANDERSEN: Senator Sanders, the floor is yours.

SANDERS: Thank you, Vice Chair Andersen. I did want to draw the committee's attention to one minor amendment that is needed for the bill that's coming around now. During drafting, we mistakenly had the bill drafted to refer to automatic clearinghouse payments. The correct terminology is automated clearinghouse payments. I've drafted the amendment to correct this area-- error and I will recommend that the committee advance the bill with the amendment. Thank you.

ANDERSEN: Thank you, Senator Sanders. Are there any questions for Senator Sanders? Seeing none, that concludes the hearing for LB59 and for our committee.

SANDERS: Thank you.