

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

Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
November 17, 2008

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Government, Military and Veterans Affairs met at 2:30 p.m. on Monday, November 17, 2008, in Room 2102 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Ray Aguilar, Chairperson; Kent Rogert, Vice Chairperson; Greg Adams; Bill Avery; Russ Karpisek; Scott Lautenbaugh; and Rich Pauls. Senators absent: Mike Friend. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Thank you, everyone, for being almost on time. Okay. It's Lautenbaugh's fault, that's on the record. I'd like to welcome everybody to this Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee hearing to approve a couple of gubernatorial appointments: Mr. Paul Hosford, a reappointment to the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission. He's the gentleman on the phone as we speak. And Amber Brown who is here in person, reappointment to the State Personnel Board. There are sign-in sheets over by Senator Avery if anybody would like to testify on behalf of any of the candidates. Also, they're welcome to give a statement following the candidate's statement. And if everyone would please turn off their cell phones, we can get started right away. And we're going to start with Mr. Hosford because he is on the phone right now. Paul, can you hear me all right? []

PAUL HOSFORD: Yes, I can. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: This is Senator Aguilar speaking, by the way. Seated here at the table, we have Senator Lautenbaugh from Omaha; Senator Karpisek from Wilber; Senator Kent Rogert of Tekamah; Senator Bill Avery of Lincoln; Senator Rich Pahls of Omaha; and Senator Greg Adams of York. We also have Sherry Shaffer, our committee clerk; Christine Abraham, our very competent legal counsel. []

PAUL HOSFORD: Good afternoon, everyone. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Good afternoon. Paul, let's start off by you just telling us briefly a little bit about yourself and tell us a little bit about what the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission is all about in your opinion. Go ahead. []

PAUL HOSFORD: (Exhibit 1) All right. Well, I'm an entrenched Boone County resident. My family has been here since the early 1870s, and I'll have to admit that I love the place and have worked very hard to be able to stay here. I'm a writer. I write columns. They occasionally even appear in the Omaha World-Herald. Oftentimes they're dealing with rural issues. I'm also involved with two nonprofit organizations here in Boone County, the Arts Council and the Historical Society. I'm a father of three and I've been married for 23 years now. And I wear several hats professionally. I'm a musician as well as being a writer and serving with these nonprofit agencies, and I also own (inaudible).

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As far as the commission, well, I think the commission is one of the more vital that we have simply because it does seek to keep everybody honest. And I think it does this not so much by assuming that people aren't honest, but just in helping people to understand some other complicated issues, whether it's conflict of interest or, you know, the use of public resources. That's an issue that comes up quite a bit--what is an improper use of public resources in terms of campaigning or something like that. The commission also, you know, outside of just ethical regulation, it provides a great deal of help to candidate committees, especially for new candidates. And they provide a great booklet that answers just about any question that you could come up with. But on top of that, you know, they meet directly with the people on these candidate committees who oftentimes have had no experience with this and don't really know how to properly navigate, you know, all of the regulations that do govern this. So I feel the commission, you know, plays a vital role in a couple of respects. And I hope that answers your question. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: It does very well. I really appreciate your perspective on that. I would ask the committee members if anyone else has any questions for you, Paul. I'm getting a no, so I thank you for calling in and being so on time. I appreciate that. We'll let you know how we decide later on today I'm sure. Thank you. []

PAUL HOSFORD: Okay. Well, I want to thank all of you for taking the time to talk with me and I do appreciate being allowed to phone in. It is a very long drive, so I appreciate your time and your respect for mine. So thank you very much. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Not a problem. Thank you. []

PAUL HOSFORD: Goodbye. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Next, Amber Brown who we have in person. Please join us. And we can start off the same way, tell us a little bit about yourself. I understand you're a reappointment, but tell us a little bit about the State Personnel Board, just briefly. Go ahead. []

AMBER BROWN: (Exhibit 2) Okay. Well, I really enjoy the State Personnel Board. We meet quarterly to discuss appeals that come before us and determine whether they were decided fairly and according to the rules and regulations of the state of Nebraska. And I think you have a really great Department of Administrative Services. It seems like they are always deciding fairly and they're doing a good job. And you have a great group of people on the board right now I think. So I'm just happy to be here and happy for the opportunity to serve. I really enjoy it. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Thank you, Amber, and thank you for what you do. It's nice that people step up and take on that responsibility. I would ask the committee if anyone has any questions for you? Senator Avery, fire away. []

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SENATOR AVERY: Were you before this committee last year? []

AMBER BROWN: Yes, I was. []

SENATOR AVERY: So was that a temporary appointment or filling out an unexpired term? []

AMBER BROWN: Filling out an unexpired term. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Actually both the candidates, Mr. Hosford and Amber, we heard last year and they both filled unexpired terms, if I understand correctly. []

SENATOR AVERY: Oh, okay. I remember you. I guess I didn't remember him. []

_____ : He's hard to see (laughter). []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Further questions? Senator Karpisek. []

SENATOR KARPISEK: Thank you, Senator Aguilar. You were only there for a short time, but do you see anything big that needs to be addressed or do you think it's running pretty smoothly and just kind of steer the ship? []

AMBER BROWN: I think it's running very smoothly. Just a couple of issues, you know, and it seems like all of the issues that I have encountered that the state of Nebraska has operated fairly in their decisions, and we've always sided with the state of Nebraska, so. []

SENATOR KARPISEK: Okay. Thank you. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: I think Mr. Daley runs a pretty smooth ship. []

AMBER BROWN: Yes. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: And pretty easy to agree with that. Further questions? []

SENATOR LAUTENBAUGH: I was going to ask Senator Avery if he has a problem with people filling out unexpired terms, you know, because I want to know. []

SENATOR AVERY: No, sir, none. (Laugh) []

SENATOR AGUILAR: No further questions, thank you very much, Amber. []

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AMBER BROWN: Thank you. []

SENATOR AGUILAR: Thanks for coming down today. We really appreciate it on short notice. []

Chairperson

Committee Clerk