

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

Natural Resources Committee
January 25, 2018

[LB754 CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Natural Resources met at 1:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 25, 2018, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on LB754 and the gubernatorial appointment of Bradley Bird. Senators present: Dan Hughes, Chairperson; Bruce Bostelman, Vice Chairperson; Joni Albrecht; Suzanne Geist; Rick Kolowski; John McCollister; and Dan Quick. Senators absent: Lynne Walz.

SENATOR HUGHES: I see it's 1:30 according to my phone, so we will open the hearing. Welcome to your Nebraska Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Dan Hughes; I am from Venango, Nebraska, and I represent the 44th Legislative District. I serve as Chair of the committee. The committee will take up bills in the order posted. 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. The committee members might come and go during the hearing; this is just part of the process as we have bills to introduce in other committees. I ask you to abide by the following procedures to better facilitate today's proceedings. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Please move to the reserved chairs when you are ready to testify; these are the first two chairs on either side of the front aisle. Introducers will make initial statements followed by proponents, opponents, and neutral testimony. Closing remarks are reserved for the introducing senator only. If you are planning to testify, please pick up a green sign-in sheet that is on the table at the back of the room. Please fill out the green sign-in sheet before you testify. Please print, and it is important that you complete the form in its entirety. When it is your turn to testify, give the green sheet to the committee clerk or to a page. This is to help us make a more accurate public record. If you do not wish to testify today but would like to record your name as being present at the hearing, there's a separate white sheet on the tables that you can sign in for that purpose. This will be a part of the official record of the hearing. If you have handouts, please make sure you have 12 copies and give them to the page when you come up to testify and they will be distributed to the committee. When you're coming up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Tell us your name and please spell your first and last name to ensure that we get an accurate record. No displays of support or opposition to a bill, vocal or otherwise, is allowed at a public hearing. The committee members with us today will introduce themselves beginning on my left.

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Good afternoon and welcome. I'm Rick Kolowski, District 31 in southwest Omaha.

SENATOR GEIST: Hello, my name is Suzanne Geist, I represent District 25 which is here in Lincoln on the east side and includes the town of Walton and Waverly.

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SENATOR QUICK: I'm Dan Quick, I represent District 35, Grand Island.

SENATOR HUGHES: And on my right.

SENATOR ALBRECHT: Good afternoon. I'm Joni Albrecht from District 17 which is Thurston, Wayne, and Dakota Counties in northeast Nebraska. Welcome.

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: I'm John McCollister, District 20, central Omaha.

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: I'm Bruce Bostelman, District 23, Saunders, Butler, and the majority of Colfax Counties.

SENATOR HUGHES: To my left is committee legal counsel, Laurie Lage. And to my far right is the committee clerk, Mandy Mizerski. Our page for the committee today is Lee-Ann Sims from Lincoln; she is a junior at UNL studying political science and global studies. I want to get this on the record. There's been a change in the committee procedures across all committees effective January 23. Written letters to be included to the record must be submitted to the committee clerk by 5:00 p.m. the business day before the scheduled hearing of that particular bill. You must also indicate on your testimony that you would like it to be included in the record. Written testimony for the record is received only if you are unable to be present at the hearing to testify. Your name will be read in during the hearing as having submitted a letter and the letter itself will be included in the official records. Unless you testify in person before the committee, your name will not be included in the committee statement. We have 17 members and 4 leaders from the Eighth Water Leaders Academy joining us today in the room. They are visiting the committee for just a little bit and if you would rise we would like to recognize you. (Applause) Thank you for being here and for your commitment to learning about water. So with that, the first thing on the agenda is the appointment of Bradley Bird to the Nebraska Ethanol Board. Bradly, if you would want to come up and take a seat. We appreciate it. And just give us a little background on who you are and why you want to be on the Ethanol Board. Thank you for coming.

BRADLEY BIRD: (Exhibit 1) Okay. Thanks for having me. So I'm Brad Bird, currently I'm the business manager of Steamfitters and Lumbers Local Union-464. We have jurisdiction in the whole state of Nebraska and 13 counties in Iowa. Before I was elected to this position, I worked with a mechanical contractor for 16 years. Did a lot of work in the ethanol industry, a lot of different industries. And when I was asked if I would be interested in it, I was interested...I was formerly on the Workforce Investment Board. Just kind of starting to get my hands around that, and I'd been on there for a couple of years, and had the opportunity to do this and thought, yeah, I'd really like to learn more about the industry and be involved and bring anything I can from the labor perspective. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Are there questions from the committee? Senator McCollister.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Chairman Hughes. Have you ever actually worked inside an ethanol plant? [CONFIRMATION]

BRADLEY BIRD: I have, I have; quite a few times up at the Cargill plant just outside Blair. And then there's a small plant near Plainview, Nebraska. I was involved in a renovation up there.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Is the Ethanol Board kind of like many of the boards we have in here where there are folks assigned from specific industries to represent...to be represented on that board? [CONFIRMATION]

BRADLEY BIRD: I believe so. I can tell you my two predecessors, the two business managers before me, both served on the board also. So I believe so, yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR McCOLLISTER: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. Any other questions? I did spend, I don't know, seven or eight years on the Ethanol Board, so I know what you're doing...or what you're in for. Thank you for being willing to serve and provide that perspective. Being a farmer myself and having the ability to have access to a union person to explain the challenges that are in your industry, it certainly has made me a better board member and, I think, probably made me a better senator as well. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for coming. [CONFIRMATION]

BRADLEY BIRD: Well, thank you so much for having me today. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: We appreciate your willingness to serve the state of Nebraska. Is there anyone wishing to give testimony as a proponent of Mr. Bird? Anyone wishing to give testimony as an opponent of Mr. Bird? Anyone wishing to give testimony in the neutral position for Mr. Bird? Seeing none, that will close that segment of the hearing. And we will move on to LB754 from Senator Brewer. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

TONY BAKER: (Exhibit 1) Good afternoon. Thank you, Chairman Hughes, and good afternoon members of the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Tony Baker; I'm Senator Tom Brewer's legislative aide. For the record, that's T-o-n-y B-a-k-e-r. Senator Brewer sends his regrets; he's unable to be here this afternoon as he's needed on the Government, Military and Veteran Affairs

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Committee. My introduction will be very brief. I'm here to introduce LB754 which creates an opportunity for citizens to purchase an annual state park permit for a discount during the yearly process of registering their personal vehicle. As it stands today, there are a number of unresolved issues with the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Nebraska Game and Parks Department that would make passing this bill right now problematic and ill advised. Consequently, Senator Brewer believes this bill is still a good idea, but he told me it's just the wrong time to bring it. Had we not passed the seven-day deadline in the rules, Senator Brewer would have moved to pull this bill. As things are however, Senator Brewer asked me to tell you please hold this bill in committee as we work through these issues with the state agencies. He will introduce it again next year, subject to your questions. That concludes my testimony. Thank you. [LB754]

SENATOR HUGHES: Thank you, Mr. Baker. Are there questions? Senator Kolowski. [LB754]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Mr. Baker, thank you very much. I think it's a great bill. It's a time saver, energy saver, and all the rest and great way to advertise the fact that the park permits and makes common sense. I hope you can get the kinks out of it and bring it back next year and I think it will be good for our state and good for our citizens. Thank you. [LB754]

TONY BAKER: Thank you. A constituent called and asked last summer how come it costs a hundred bucks to go fishing? Now that's a bit of a stretch, but, you know, you start adding stuff up, it gets pretty pricey. Kansas, in 2012, introduced this idea where when you re-register your vehicle, you can buy a park permit for half price. They doubled their revenue. Now I thought, you know, give the citizens a cheaper park permit, give an agency in state government that operates on very little General Funds, mostly fees, permits, and licenses more revenue. Tom thought it would be a good idea. Unfortunately, there's a number of issues right now that make it hard to work. So we got to work through it with DMV and Game and Parks, but we'll get it sorted out. [LB754]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Good. [LB754]

SENATOR HUGHES: Senator Geist. [LB754]

SENATOR GEIST: Yes, and thank you, Tony. I have a question, are you looking at the 50 percent being the discount? [LB754]

TONY BAKER: Yeah, Tom's original proposal was, you know, \$15. So \$30 right now is the price you pay over the counter retail for a park permit. The issue is it a sticker that goes on a window, is it a sticker that goes on the license plate? If you're going to tie to vehicle registration

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so your plate is good for a year, your park permit is good for the exact same period of time. How do you do that? How do you move the money from one agency that collects it to the other agency? Does DMV get a pass-through fee? If so, how much? They got to negotiate...you know, there's some issues with it we're going to work through. But, yeah, we think it's a good idea. A lot of constituents like it. [LB754]

SENATOR GEIST: So then you're just going to get more people to sign up so that you'll...the revenue will be greater than it is right now? [LB754]

TONY BAKER: The Kansas folks were actually going to come up here and testify, if we could have gotten this all worked out and they were going to bring the data. Basically, their idea was when you expose the purchase opportunity for a park permit to this much broader audience that otherwise wouldn't consider buying one, you're going to get more of them sold. And so the people who buy park permits now, there's roughly 200,000 a year sold in Nebraska for in-state park permits, you know, the idea would be that would be a much greater number. In Kansas' case it doubled, but the way Kansas does it is a little different and its hard to do an apples to apples comparison to Kansas' situation to ours. But we'll work through it. [LB754]

SENATOR GEIST: Okay, thank you. [LB754]

SENATOR HUGHES: Any other questions? Senator McCollister. [LB754]

SENATOR MCCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Senator Hughes. Yeah, thank you, Tony, for your testimony this afternoon. I like the mechanism, but I'm a little concerned about the revenue...the cost in revenue to Game and Parks. So maybe we need to verify that model. In fact, (inaudible) secondly, the programming costs seemed to me to be fairly substantial. So good going. Thank you. [LB754]

TONY BAKER: You bet. You took the words right out of the director of Game and Parks mouth, he said the same thing. [LB754]

SENATOR HUGHES: (Exhibits 2 and 3) Any additional questions? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Baker. Are there proponents of LB754 who would like to testify? We do have one letter of support from Twyla Gallino from Valentine, Nebraska. Are there any opponents to LB754? Seeing none, is there anyone who wishes to testify in the neutral position to LB754? Seeing none, we do have one letter coming in the neutral from Rhonda Lahm, Director of Department of Motor Vehicles. With that, that will conclude our hearing on LB754 and the committee hearing today in Natural Resources. [LB754]