

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Education Committee July 30, 2020

WALZ: Welcome to the Education Committee public hearing. My name is Lynne Walz from Legislative District 15. I serve as the Vice Chair of this committee. The committee will take up the confirmation of Marjean Terrell to the Nebraska State Colleges Board of Trustees. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your position on the proposed confirmation before us today. To better facilitate today's proceeding, I ask that you abide by the following procedures, which would be to please turn off cell phones and other electronic devices. The committee members with us today will introduce themselves beginning at my far right.

MURMAN: Hi, I'm Senator Dave Murman from District 38. I represent seven counties south of the tri-cities; Hastings, Grand Island, and Kearney; south, east, and west.

BREWER: Senator Tom Brewer, District 43: Gordon, Nebraska. District 43 is 13 counties of western Nebraska.

KOLOWSKI: Good morning. Rick Kolowski, District 31 in the Omaha-- southwest part of the Omaha area. Thank you.

WALZ: And I'd also like to introduce some of the best committee staff that we have in the building. To my immediate left is research, research analyst Nicole Barrett. And to my right, at the end of the table, is committee clerk Kristina-- and I'm not going to say that word--

KRISTINA KONECKO: Konecko.

WALZ: Konecko, thank you. Please remember that senators may come and go during our hearing as they may have some conflicting obligations. I'd also like to remind our committee members to speak directly into the microphones and to limit side conversations and making noise on personal devices. Lastly, we are an electronics-equipped committee and the information is provided electronically as well as in paper form. Therefore, you may see committee members referencing the information on their electronic devices. Be assured that your presence here today and your testimony are important to us and it is critical to our state government. And with that Marjean, I would invite you to just introduce yourself and give us a little bit of information and background about you.

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MARJEAN TERRELL: All right. Well, thank you so much, Vice Chair. So good morning, everybody and members of the Education Committee. I'm honored here to take part in this confirmation hearing. My name is Marjean Terrell, M-a-r-j-e-a-n T-e-r-r-e-l-l. Serving as a trustee on the board of trustees for the state-- Nebraska State Colleges allows me to positively affect the colleges that have given me so much. I attended Chadron State for three years for my prerequisites before heading to the Med Center my final year to obtain my medical technology degree. I've lived in western Nebraska essentially all of my life, but my family, my husband and I, own and operate our ranch south of Hay Springs. Prior to 1993, I served as adjunct faculty at Chadron State for nine years. But I was the on-site coordinator for a class required for all students selected for the Rural Health Opportunities Program, RHOP, and I'd audit medically-related courses assigned. The value of the RHOP program cannot be overstated. I had the opportunity to know a lot of students personally and most of them were first-generation students who came to small, rural communities with family with limited resources and I helped them be successful and remain in the RHOP program. They were very disciplined students and one of those I'd like to share about was a student, Angie [PHONETIC], from eastern Nebraska. She came to Chadron State with-- honors student, active on campus, served as the student trustee, attending the Nebraska State Colleges Board of Trustees meeting for a year, and had a part-time job while at Chadron State as a caregiver to a disabled woman. She went on to the Med Center, became a doctor, and now has a successful small-town family practice in Nebraska. She was recognized by the Med Center for what-- her outstanding teaching and mentoring of medical students during their family practice preceptorship and as an outstanding role model. She-- on her award, it stated that she was the shining example of what a Med Center-trained rural doctor ought to be in terms of a clinician, teacher, mentor, and community role model. Some of the numbers for the RHOP program-- that there's almost been just 600 students that have graduated from that program and 62 percent of all those graduates are in over 70 Nebraska counties so that's a great statistic. My most recent way to give back to Chadron was to serve on the Chadron State Foundation Board and I've been on there for almost nine years, two as the chair. And my position of serving on the foundation will end this-- at the end of October of this year. And we've done a, a lot of successful fundraising and getting some projects that were needed for the college done, such as the sports complex, the football stadium, of course, funding scholarships, but most recently, seeking support for the Math Science Center for Innovative, Innovative Learning [SIC] and I thank you for

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supporting the bonding of this crucial project for the college. Another part that has given me an insight into what's going on is I was a part of the 2025 Strategic Plan Task Force. Through the planning process, the chancellor assisted us, prioritizing the importance of students' success, academic quality, workforce portability and accessibility. And these are the priorities that get me excited and that I would-- wanted this opportunity to serve with the trustees. As an open-enrollment institution, the state colleges have a higher education-- make higher education viable for all students and they provide support services to help the students be-- prepare them for going on beyond college. And a story that just kind of emulates all of that was the young man that we got to know who came from the San Antonio, Texas area. He wanted a ranch management degree and Chadron State is always in the top three institutions with the highest enrollment numbers in the country for ranch management. The other two are Texas A&M and the University of Wyoming. This man chose to come to Chadron State, but he really struggled when he came as a freshman. One of the instructors helped this student kind of get over that hump that, you know, sometimes, some of those kids just need somebody to help them. And our family got to know Will [PHONETIC]. He did a summer internship with us on our farm ranch. And he-- it was just fun to see him blossom and turn into the outstanding, young man that he, he became. He graduated last spring with honors. His family had been in the San Antonio area for several generations, has relocated to western Nebraska. His older brother and his family bought a local meat market butcher shop. His parents even relocated here. So now, not only do we get Will for a lifetime Nebraska citizen, you know, his family is moving up here and that is such a great success story. So my final thing is I believe that we need to keep high-quality, four-year degrees affordable and accessible for all Nebraskans and the state colleges provide that opportunity for the students and I hope to be positive and, and impact the state colleges as a trustee. So thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have this morning.

WALZ: Thank you so much, Marjean. Do we have any questions from the committee? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: Again, good morning. Can you give me a quick update on the status of what should be, I think, our newest addition to Chadron State and that's the, the science building?

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MARJEAN TERRELL: Yes, the math science building is-- because of COVID, there's some different things going on that I understand that they're-- probably the groundbreaking will be done in September, with them maybe starting in November with really going hard. Yeah, with the-- really going after the project and then hopefully done in February of 2022. And because of the dedicated people in the math science building wanted to get this thing done, they have chosen to abandon the building and they moved across campus, tried to renovate different-- or, you know, move into different areas so they can get the project done even sooner. And I really appreciate the, the faculty for seeing that as-- not delaying the project, but trying to do it in two or three different sections. It's all going to be done at one, one time.

BREWER: That's, that's a revelation. President Rhine, when I was out there, talked about how they're going to try and shift and, and use part of it while construction was going on. So that, that sounds like a great idea. I just wanted to publicly say, hey, you've got my support 100 percent. You work with Indian Health Services, with Chadron State College, with Western Nebraska Community College. I think you're a perfect choice, so thank you for applying and we'll see what other questions we got.

MARJEAN TERRELL: Thank you.

WALZ: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Senator Kolowski.

KOLOWSKI: Thank you very much, Mrs. Chairman. I wondered if you'd help us by telling us what you think your strongest, your strongest suit would be as far as your, your skills and abilities? And, and thank you for applying for this. It was-- it's really great to see this quality of a person coming forward. Would you talk about the strongest suit you have?

MARJEAN TERRELL: I, I believe that partly because of my background in agriculture and healthcare, as a medical technology [SIC] that sets laboratory services, that I bring a unique set that nobody else has that-- first of all, budget is families and farm-- family farms and ranches are very tight and trying to figure out how to be successful and get those things done and to help the next generation. So I see that probably my strongest suit is-- going forward is being able to-- I want kids who have limited opportunity to go forward and be successful. I really believe they [INAUDIBLE].

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KOLOWSKI: Thank you.

WALZ: Any other questions from the committee? I just wanted to say-- I was going to ask you to maybe talk about some of your biggest achievements or, or success stories, but I have to say that I, I heard you talk about those already. And I really, really appreciate the fact that you, that you told those stories because it, it shows, you know, just how important it is in real life. And so the only, the only other thing I could ask possibly is what do you see as a future goal, just overall, as you serve on this committee?

MARJEAN TERRELL: Being a part of that strategic task force was so important to me to understand how we have to focus for what the needs of Nebraskans are going forward. And the state college system is getting in place and trying to provide the education that's needed for those future needs. And that's what I'm so excited about, is that we're not going to just produce students who may not be able to find the job when they get out. You know, we're really going to be able to help them achieve a successful goal. And I guess that's my goal, I think, for the state board of trustees.

WALZ: Well, thank you very much for taking the time to talk with us this morning. And again, I appreciate the stories that you told and we can see that, you know, your heart is really in this. So thank you so much for just taking the opportunity to talk with us this morning.

MARJEAN TERRELL: Well, thank you. I wish I could have been down there to meet and greet everybody, but this, this was a nice alternative so--

WALZ: All right. Well, that will conclude our committee hearing for this morning. Thanks again.

MARJEAN TERRELL: Thank you. Thank you, everybody.