

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
General Affairs Committee February 24, 2020

**BRIESE:** I guess we'll get going here. You got her, Alex? OK.

\_\_\_\_\_ : [INAUDIBLE]

**BRIESE:** Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. My name is Tom Briese. I'm the senator for District 41. I'm the Chairman of this committee and will be conducting today's hearing. We're here today for the purpose of conducting five appointment hearings; we'll be proceeding in the order on the agenda that's posted outside this room. If you wish to testify on any of the matters before us, we ask that you fill out one of the green sheets of paper. The green sheets are located on either side of the room. If you are here and do not wish to testify but you wish to state your support or opposition for any of the matters before us, we ask you fill out one of the sign-in sheets. If you do testify, we ask that you begin your testimony by stating and spelling your name for the record, which is very important for our Transcribers Office. The order of proceedings is that the introducers will be given an opportunity to present an opening statement. Then we will hear the proponents, the opponents, and any neutral testimony. We ask that you listen very carefully to try not to be repetitive if you are testifying on these appointments. We do use a light system in the committee. Each testifier is afforded five minutes. When the yellow light comes on, you have one minute remaining. We ask that you begin concluding your remarks. When the red light comes on, your time has expired. We will open up the committee to any questions they may have of you. At this time, I'd like to encourage everyone to turn off or silence any cell phones or electronic devices, anything that makes noise. The General Affairs Committee is a committee that is equipped for electronics, so you may see members referencing their iPads, iPhones or other electronic devices. I can assure you they are just researching any matters before us. If you have a prepared statement and exhibit or anything you would like distributed to the committee members, we ask that you provide 12 copies to our clerk. If you don't have 12 copies, don't worry; provide what you have and we'll take it from there. And with that, I'd like to proceed to introduction of members. To my right, I have legal counsel for the General Affairs Committee, Loguen Blazek. To the far left, I have committee clerk, Alexander DeGarmo. And then with that, I'd like to introduce-- self-introduction-- have self-introduction of my fellow committee members, starting with Carol Blood.

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**BLOOD:** Good afternoon. My name is Senator Carol Blood, and I represent District 3, which is western Bellevue and southeastern Papillion, Nebraska.

**BRIESE:** [PHONE RINGING] Go ahead.

**ARCH:** John Arch, District 14, Papillion, La Vista, in Sarpy.

**HUNT:** Hi, I'm Megan Hunt, and I represent midtown Omaha.

**LOWE:** John Lowe, District 37, southeast half of Buffalo County.

**MOSER:** Mike Moser, District 22. It's Platte County, a little bit of Colfax County, and most of Stanton County.

**BRANDT:** Tom Brandt, District 32, Fillmore--

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** Hello?

**BRANDT:** --Thayer, Jefferson, Saline, and southwestern Lancaster Counties.

**BRIESE:** Hello. Whom am I speaking to here?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** I'm having a hard time hearing you guys. This is Janell Beveridge.

**BRIESE:** Well, Janell Beveridge, this is Tom Briese, Chairman of the General Affairs Committee. How are you today?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** I'm good. Do you-- you are really coming in and out. So I'm sorry if I can't get you real well.

**BRIESE:** OK. We can, we can hear you fairly well. We could go-- let's go this way and we'll try to speak up as well as we can and go from there.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** It's a little better now. OK.

**BRIESE:** OK. Thank you. And we had-- Senator Wayne, would you like to introduce yourself?

**WAYNE:** Justin Wayne, District 13.

**BRIESE:** Thank you. Before we get started here, I'd also like to have the-- our pages introduce themselves. Or stand up and I'll introduce

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you. We have Angenita from Union College. We have Taylor from Doane College. Thank you for joining us here today. And with that, Ms. Beveridge, I'd like to have you tell us about yourself and what-- what you'd like us to know about yourself.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** Yeah. I am-- have been involved with the Racing Commission for quite a few years, filling out a term of Wayne Young, back in the '90s when he was from Cozad; he was a banker. And I was, at the time, the president and owner of the Bank of Paxton and a Republican, and they were looking for that. So Deb Gilg, who was at that time our county attorney, had suggested that they appoint me and fill his term out. And then it's worked out ever since. So I've been involved quite a lot over the years. And I also have been a teacher and a coach. I coached volleyball and basketball and I also currently will be coaching boys' golf here in-- next week in Paxton. I have-- I was widowed in 1989. And that's [INAUDIBLE]-- my husband was a banker and that's when I took over the bank. And I took that, I ran that for 20 years and then sold it and went back to part-time teaching and coaching and kind of sliding into the retirement years. But I also have a daughter. She's got-- she married last summer and I have a grandson now. So that's-- that's about it in a nutshell.

**BRIESE:** OK, very good. Thank you for that. And then I'll open it up to any questions of my fellow committee members. Do we have any questions? Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Thank you. This is-- this is John Arch, Senator Arch. How-- how much time do you commit to your involvement with the Racing Commission?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** Oh, I-- I commit all the time that's required of me. I keep up on all the affairs and I don't believe-- I believe I've only missed about three or four meetings since I've ever been on it. Being the furthest away from them is kind of unique. My mother was sick last year. I was involved with taking care of her and she's-- subsequently passed away in December. And that's why I'm not able to be with you today. I am in her property in Arizona taking care of loose ends. So I return actually in two days. But I-- I commit quite a bit of time. I keep up with it quite well.

**ARCH:** Well, thank you for your level of commitment and for serving the state like that. Thank you.

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**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Arch.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** Thank you, yeah. I was going to mention that-- I don't know if any of you remember Kurt Yost. He was a lobbyist with the bankers and passed away. He was a really good tie for me, a great friend. And-- and through him, I kept up with a lot of the Legislature issues. So I really miss him at this time--

**BRIESE:** You bet.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** --since he's passed away.

**BRIESE:** Yes. Very good. Any other questions? Seeing none, Ms. Beveridge, I did have a question for you. Are you familiar with the ballot proposal that I believe it is the Ho-Chunk tribe and the Horsemen Society is working on to put casinos at racetracks?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** I am. I am familiar with that. Have not seen it per se, or-- but I am familiar with their efforts.

**BRIESE:** Do you have any insight as to how that would be implemented at the various tracks, or have you been involved in any of those discussions at all?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** I-- have, well-- we have not really brought up the fact that, what are we going to do if this passes because that doesn't-- hasn't happened yet. But the way I understand it, if they would get it on the ballot, that any of-- any of their gambling would be confined to the racetrack facilities, which is already permitting wagering. But that-- but to be honest with you, I have-- I have not had any discussions on how we will be perceive-- perceiving this.

**BRIESE:** OK. You-- you're not privy to any discussions as to the size of the facilities or physical expansion of the facilities to accommodate this, or what-- what the plan is there, anyway?

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** No. Oh, as far as, as far as facilities, the facilities that are being constructed and built and whatever are-- like the Lincoln facility, which these are-- these are all facilities that have to have live racing for simulcasting and they are doing this to accommodate the specifications needed for that, so that they can also have the simulcast business. But as far as accommodating any other expanded gambling, I am-- I have not been in on any of those or have not been brought to a meeting per se.

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**BRIESE:** OK, very good. I just wanted to inquire about that. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you very much for calling in today. I appreciate your-- Senator Arch indicated, appreciate your commitment to what you're doing here and all you've done. And we-- we will be getting in touch with you soon.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** OK. And I do appreciate you being able to accommodate me by phone. Unfortunately, I've always attended the hearing, but I'm out of town at this time, so every other time I've always been there. So thank you.

**BRIESE:** You bet. And while you're still on the line, I'll ask here if there's any proponent testimony and I don't see any. Any opponent testimony? I don't see anyone. Any-- any neutral testimony? Seeing none-- and that-- that should wrap up our hearing here for you today, Ms. Beveridge. Thank you again for calling in.

**JANELL BEVERIDGE:** OK, thank you so much.

**BRIESE:** OK. With that, we'll close the hearing on Janell Beveridge. And then next is Ms. Kelly Lambert, correct? Confirmation hearing on Kelly Lambert, Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling. And she's a call-in also.

**BRIESE:** Hello?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** Hello?

**BRIESE:** Hello?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** Hello?

**BRIESE:** Yes. Is this Ms. Lambert?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** Yes, it is.

**BRIESE:** Yes. This is Tom Briese. I Chair the General Affairs Committee, and I'm sitting here with my fellow committee members. And we're gonna open up the hearing on your appointment to the Commission on Problem Gambling. And we'd like to have you share with us any information or anything about yourself that you would like to present today. So you can go ahead and start anytime.

**KELLY LAMBERT:** OK. Well, I am a-- [LAUGH] trying to get over the gambling. I've been clean for 17 years and I just want to see if I can

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give back from some that I took. You know, that's kind of my reasoning to try to get on here, see if I can help other people.

**BRIESE:** Yes. Very good. Anything else you'd like to share?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** I think that's-- pretty much sums it up. I mean--

**BRIESE:** OK. OK. Very good. Well, with that, I will open it up to any questions from my fellow committee members that they might have of you.

**KELLY LAMBERT:** OK.

**BRIESE:** Yes. Any questions from the committee? Senator Hunt.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Chairman Briese. Hello, Ms. Lambert. How are you today?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** I'm good. How are you?

**HUNT:** Good, thank you. Are you-- are you a reappointment to the committee or are you seeking your first term on this committee?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** I am, I am doing my first full term. I did a sub for, like, two-- two or-- I've been to a meeting a couple times, let's put it that way. And I was filling, or finishing, somebody else's, I believe. So this is the start of a new term for me.

**HUNT:** OK. How long were you on the committee previously?

**KELLY LAMBERT:** Just-- I was just on it-- the appointment would be like-- I think all this last year this was my first meeting. So six months.

**HUNT:** OK. Thank you very much.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Hunt. And Ms. Lambert, you indicated that you had a gambling addiction at one point.

**KELLY LAMBERT:** Yes, I-- I'm a recovering gambler.

**BRIESE:** Yes. And how do you feel your experience as a recovered gambler can help or has helped in your role on the Commission on Problem Gambling?

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**KELLY LAMBERT:** Well, I just think-- people-- the experience, you can't, you know-- you don't know it if you haven't lived through it. So there might be some things on my end that, you know, they don't realize or recognize that I can throw out there that might, you know--

**BRIESE:** Yeah.

**KELLY LAMBERT:** --help.

**BRIESE:** You bet. Well, that makes a lot of sense, I agree. Any other questions? Well, seeing none, while you're here on the line with us, I'll ask if there are any proponent testifiers. Seeing none, any opposition testimony? Seeing none, anyone who wish-- would wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, Ms. Lambert, thank you again for calling in. Appreciate your service and what you do for us. We will close the hearing on your appointment and we will be in touch with you soon. Thanks. Thanks again.

**KELLY LAMBERT:** OK, thank you.

**BRIESE:** And that closes the hearing on Kelly Lambert. And the next appointment hearing is Mr. James Brummer to the State Electrical Board.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** [INAUDIBLE]

**BRIESE:** You bet. Have-- have a seat.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Good afternoon and welcome.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Good afternoon. James S. Brummer. I guess I don't-- just need to state my name and [INAUDIBLE]--

**BRIESE:** Spell it, spell it, please.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** --for Nebraska--

**BRIESE:** Spell it, please.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Brummer, B-r-u-m-m-e-r.

**BRIESE:** Yeah. Very good. Then just go ahead and tell us about yourself.

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**JAMES BRUMMER:** I'm on the-- this is an appointment to the State Electrical Board. This is my second term. I'm actually the representative for the public power of the state of Nebraska, the representative for that. Pretty much, I started my career as an electrician quite a few years ago. I've worked for rural public power for roughly six years. Then-- since then, I've worked for Nebraska Public Power going on 30 years, so I've been in the electric industry quite a while. I worked with Kevin's inspectors all the time. I basically-- within NPPD, I designed-- worked with electrical contractors, electricians, developers for building infrastructure for-- for whatever projects that they have. So I, I do have-- I worked-- like I said, I worked with them guys quite often.

**BRIESE:** OK. Very, very good. Any questions? Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Chairman Briese, and thank you for stepping up to the plate for another term. I appreciate that.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Thank you.

**BLOOD:** I'm curious because we get information and suggestions from the State Electrical Board a lot on certain types of licensure. And this isn't a trick question so don't worry.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** OK. All right.

**BLOOD:** But I'm curious. We keep getting bills brought to us that verbally, the intent is to remove hurdles to employment, which I'm all for. But what I'm seeing when it comes to, especially the-- the electrical demographic, is-- it seems that we want to remove certain types of licensure in general to make it easier for people to get their hands on-- on-- on these issues.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Uh-huh.

**BLOOD:** That's not how I wanted to phrase it. But, you know what I'm talking about.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Right.

**BLOOD:** And I'm concerned because I feel like we have such a well-trained workforce when it comes to our journeymen especially. I'm really curious how you feel about it. Do you feel that this is something that we should be eliminating when it comes to education and

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when it comes to the process they have to go through to be well trained when it comes to dealing with electricity?

**JAMES BRUMMER:** I know like in the field that I'm in-- I mean, there's quite a bit of this stuff. Being on the board, they, as electricians-- I don't know as much about that. I can--

**BLOOD:** Uh-huh.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** --lean on the other board members as they're-- those are the experts in that part of it. But when it comes to anything within, like, education, stuff like that that's very important on that part of it-- it seems like anytime that we have somebody-- a fatality or somebody that's hurt, it's because they're not educated and they shouldn't probably have been doing the work to begin with.

**BLOOD:** So if I hear you--

**JAMES BRUMMER:** [INAUDIBLE].

**BLOOD:** Oh, I'm sorry.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** I'm sorry. I totally agree that-- that, you know, education, the licensing, those things are very important.

**BLOOD:** So if I hear you correctly, education is-- is really important when it comes to losing someone's life.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Correct. Yes.

**BLOOD:** All right. I appreciate it. Thank you, so much.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Yep. You're welcome.

**BLOOD:** And thank you again for stepping up.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Blood. Anyone else? Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** It's kind of a follow-up question. One of the things we also hear is there's a shortage. We-- we don't-- we need more workers in the field. Are-- are you seeing that? And if so, are we making any progress?

**JAMES BRUMMER:** In my type of work, I do. I work with a lot of electricians and they-- they do struggle with finding people to work for them. You know, I think they-- they-- there is a shortage out

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there, possibly. I mean, I'm just kind of going by-- I don't know the statistics or anything like that. I just-- from the guys that I work with, they're saying, you know, they-- they have a lot of work and they could surely use more help.

**ARCH:** Uh-huh.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Thank you.

**LOWE:** That was going to be--

**BRIESE:** [INAUDIBLE] Any-- any other questions? Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** So do you get involved more like in substation work or in major projects or--?

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Mine is more on the-- the-- it'd be like the residential, light commercial, industrial light-- light industrial type of work is what, within NPPD, what I do. Design like-- it could be, say, like you were building a home outside of your hometown. I'd be the guy that would be in contact, working with an electrician on how to get the power infrastructure out to your-- where you live.

**MOSER:** Where the pole goes in the yard and what size--

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Where the poles go, yeah.

**MOSER:** --what size conductors you need--

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Correct, yep.

**MOSER:** --what transformers you need and all that kind of stuff.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** Correct, yep.

**MOSER:** OK. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Senator Moser. Anyone else? Seeing no one else, thank you for your testimony here. And I'll open it up to proponents. Any proponent testimony? Looks like we have somebody coming. So thank you. You can have a seat right here if you'd like, Mr. Brummer.

**JAMES BRUMMER:** OK, thank you.

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**BRIESE:** Good afternoon and welcome.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** Thank you. Mr. Chairman, committee members, my name is Kevin Booker, K-e-v-i-n B-o-o-k-e-r. As Jim testified, this is his second term on the Electrical Board. He's done a fantastic job helping us to coordinate the utility connections with the electrical services provided by the electrical contractors and, you know, working with these large developments to make sure that everything, when they're ready for power, they've got power there. He's-- he's good at hearing public comments if the public has any concerns. So we-- I would definitely like to support his reappointment to the Electrical Board.

**BRIESE:** Good. Very good. Thank you. Any questions for Mr. Booker?  
Senator Blood.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Chairman Briese. I am sorry to put you on the spot, but I just wanted to respond to something that we just-- was just asked. Do we have reciprocity agreements for journeymen?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** We do. Yeah. And we probably reciprocate, oh, three to five per day, coming in--

**BLOOD:** Uh-huh.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** --from other states. As a matter of fact, just today we brought in two from Texas, one from Minnesota, one from Iowa, just today.

**BLOOD:** Excellent. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Blood. Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Chairman Briese, and thank you for being here today, Mr. Booker-- along with the-- the same comments that were made earlier to Mr. Brummer. We had talked about-- Senator Blood talked about not enough education going into some of these things. I know we have a bill that's before this committee that creates new licensures. Do you believe that the education in, in those licensures is sufficient for those licenses?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** Basically, I feel that our education is lacking. We don't have enough education requirements that other states do. So our requirements to get a licensure is a lot less than that of other states. But getting down to the other licenses that we're proposing, the Board has reviewed them. They've heard the public comments on

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them. And, you know, they-- they've had quite a bit of discussion among the Board on what is adequate. So some of the training that we're looking at on there is based off of-- if it's something that's all, that's all they're going to do. Every day, they're only going to do one little piece of work such as wire a sign or a PV or irrigation or wire a small commercial building. So I would like to see more education out there, but unfortunately, we don't have enough facilities--

**LOWE:** Uh-huh.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** --to give everybody what they really need. So we have to look at on-the-job experience. And if we feel that they're getting enough experience on the job, is-- is how we looked at it, so-- I don't know if I explained it very well or not.

**LOWE:** So you-- you think the apprenticeship program works well?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** It does work well

**LOWE:** On-the-job training.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** It does. I would like to see more. But we're-- we're less of most of our surrounding states. You know, most have a 144-per-year requirement if you go to Colorado, Iowa, Wyoming. We don't have that. Of those states that I just mentioned, though, they all have specialty licenses already in place. So when we looked at the requirements for here, we looked at what their requirements were.

**LOWE:** OK. All right. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Lowe. Anyone else? Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** You say the 144 requirement. That's hours of continuing education each year? Is that what you are talking about?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** No, the continuing education is to renew a license--

**MOSER:** Uh-huh. What is the 144?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** --while they're working in the trade, 144 hours per year of classroom time, such as a community college. Like here in Lincoln and in Omaha, we have Associated Building Contractors [SIC] has a program. And then also in Lincoln and Omaha we have the local IBEW. JATC also has training that they require their people to go through.

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It would be nice if we add that requirement for everybody, you know. So we do-- we are a little bit behind the gun in classroom continuing--

**MOSER:** So continuing education is already required. This is beyond that?

**KEVIN BOOKER:** Right. Twelve hours every two years of continuing ed. And I believe that part of what we were looking at, for even the special ones, we were going to include that 12 hours for them also.

**MOSER:** OK. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Moser. Anyone else? Seeing no other questions, thank you for your testimony.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Any other proponent testifiers? Seeing none, any neutral-- excuse me, opponent testifiers? Seeing none, any neutral testifiers? Seeing none, that should close the hearing on the appointment of Mr. Brummer. Thank you for joining us here today. Next up, we have the appointment hearing for David Hunter to the State Electrical Board. Good afternoon and welcome, Mr. Hunter.

**DAVID HUNTER:** Thank you. David Hunter, Junior; H-u-n-t-e-r.

**BRIESE:** Go ahead and [INAUDIBLE].

**DAVID HUNTER:** I'm general manager of the Auburn Board of Public Works with the utilities operations in Auburn, Nebraska. We're also responsible for the communities of Brownville, Nemaha, Johnson. Our last customer to the west is two miles east of the Tecumseh State Penitentiary. We've got a pretty vast area for a municipality district. We also provide water and wastewater services for the city of Peru. We're working with Peru right now. Most of you are aware of the flooding issues they've had in Peru. And we're working with Peru on their water and wastewater issues. I've been a utility manager for approximately about 21 years. Done-- city of Holdrege was my previous employment. Before that, I came out of a small community in Iowa. My hometown is Auburn, so I'm back home. Some say that's a good thing and some say it's bad, coming back home. But I look forward to this appointment. I think it will be an interesting appointment. I've worked with contractors, electricians, developers, setting up

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services, size, running conductors. I think I've got a pretty good experience on what needs to be done and how it needs to be done.

**BRIESE:** OK, well, thank you. Any questions for Mr. Hunter? Senator Arch.

**ARCH:** Thank you. And it-- with-- given your background, what-- what particular area of expertise do you think you'll-- you'll be able to offer to-- to the board?

**DAVID HUNTER:** Well, as a manager of a municipal utility, you have to wear about 35 different hats. So I really don't have good expertise in electrical. That is my strong background. But when you deal with electrical, water, wastewater, streets, other communities, I think you bring a vast knowledge in. And hopefully I can use that to benefit the board moving forward.

**ARCH:** Great. Thanks for volunteering to do that.

**DAVID HUNTER:** Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Arch. Senator Lowe.

**LOWE:** Thank you, Chairman. And thank you for being here, Mr. Hunter. Kind of off the subject, but since you're dealing with it this time, how is Peru dealing with everything right now?

**DAVID HUNTER:** It's-- it's a-- it's coming together. It's a slow process. I, you know-- the FEMA funding and some of those other entities coming from the outside-- that's a slow, slow process. I wish it could be more expedited. We've got-- I'm going to call it a ticking time bomb, the temporary water system that's there. And that's really what it is. Hopefully, it will hold up till we can get some permanent solution in there, till Peru can get a permanent solution in there and keep things going. But the college puts a struggle on us. With the loading from the college, that's really where the challenge is for getting water and wastewater facilities, keep them operating.

**LOWE:** Thank you for what you're doing.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Lowe. Any other questions? Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** Do you have generation in Auburn or do you buy your power from a--

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**DAVID HUNTER:** We buy--

**MOSER:** --wholesaler or?

**DAVID HUNTER:** We buy our wholesale power from NPPD. And then we get a 22 percent allotment from WAPA and then we have 18 megawatt of dual fuel generation in Auburn.

**MOSER:** So what fuels--?

**DAVID HUNTER:** Natural gas and diesel.

**MOSER:** So why would you require two fuels? In case one would get interrupted or something?

**DAVID HUNTER:** The units we have are basically a diesel power plant unit, but they can run on natural gas also and they run more efficiently and more clean on natural gas than they do straight diesel.

**MOSER:** They use those to shave peaks, or do you run them all the time?

**DAVID HUNTER:** Actually-- actually, our generation is leased back to NPPD. They pay us a monthly lease payment for the capacity and then it's used for emergencies or peak shaving through NPPD.

**MOSER:** OK. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Moser. Anyone else? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. We'll open up now to proponent testimony.

**DAVID HUNTER:** Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Good afternoon and welcome.

**KEVIN BOOKER:** [LAUGH] Mr. Chairman, committee members, my name's Kevin Booker, K-e-v-i-n B-o-o-k-e-r. I'm with the Nebraska State Electrical Division. And although this is Mr. Hunter's first term on the Electrical Board, I've worked with him for years since I moved to Nebraska. He's always been very helpful. He keeps an eye out for us. If he sees anything of concern, he contacts us and he's worked very well with us for-- since 2012, since I've been here. So very informational as far as services, he's assisted us with some of the design on some of the larger facilities. So between our relationship

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with the rural, municipal and other power companies, we feel that he's a great fit for our Electrical Board.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Mr. Booker. Any questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony. Any other proponent testimony? Seeing none, any opponent testimony? Anyone testifying in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close the hearing on the appointment of Mr. David Hunter to the State Electrical Board. Thank you. And with that, we will open up the hearing on Mr. Mark Laughlin to the Nebraska Arts Council. Good afternoon and welcome.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Thank you. Mark Laughlin, L-a-u-g-h-l-i-n.

**BRIESE:** Go ahead.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** I'm a lawyer in Omaha. I grew up in Omaha, worked for the same law firm since 1992. I love theater. Our family loves theater. I've been on the Arts Council once before, from 2010 to 2016. The Arts Council gives-- gives away about \$2 million a year to Nebraska artists, theater, musicians, painters, what have you. It's really, really neat. The best part of the whole deal is not the board meetings, that's the worst part, but the best part is being on the panels. They get to review people who are applying for money all over the state and it's very, very rewarding. That's the main reason I want to get back on the Arts Council. One other thing I'll just share with you briefly to the-- and you may not know the details of this, but we have a public-- Nebraska has a public art fund that has \$10.5 million in it that's been funded from 1999 to the present. And the Legislature, in its wisdom, said, well, but we're not giving you this money, you know, unless you go out and raise a similar fund, you know, so we can leverage the money. So there's also a private fund that's been a deal, and that has over \$12 million currently in it. And on the public fund only, that now has \$10-- the same \$10.5 million that you have given to the arts in Nebraska, there's been \$9.6 million since 1999 that's been spun off of that. And that doesn't count a single dollar that's come from the private. So the money-- and the only point I just wanted to raise with all of you is the money that you're giving us now literally is the gift that will keep giving and giving and giving after all of you are term-limited and gone and we're all-- we're all gone, and it's 2060. The money that you're giving this year will continue to be accruing income, having been matched by private sources, and will continue in 2060 to be helping the arts in Nebraska.

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**BRIESE:** Thank you, Mr. Laughlin. Any questions for Mr. Laughlin?  
Senator Brandt.

**BRANDT:** Thank you, Mr. Laughlin, for attending today. I'm from a rural area in the state. I appreciate all the work that you've done in the Arts Council prior to this. How do we get more impact in outstate Nebraska for the arts?

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** That is a question that we discuss on the Arts Council because we're the stewards of the money that you give us. And part of it is, the Arts Council staff has pretty good relationships throughout the state and they do statewide tours. They have help on how to write grants. They have help on-- if you want to organize into certain districts. So the Arts Council is doing many things to try to basically get people from the 3rd District to apply for grants and-- and use that money.

**BRANDT:** All right. Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Brandt.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Oh, if I could, I apologize. Our goal, you know, one-third of the Arts Council is from each Congressional District and our goal is to award one-third of all dollars. And I don't know-- I haven't been on the Council for the last three years-- but we-- we go out of our way to try to achieve that goal.

**BRANDT:** You can award more in the 3rd District if you want.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Well, we-- and we do. We do want to do that.

**BRANDT:** Yeah.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Brandt. Senator Hunt.

**HUNT:** Thank you, Chairman Briese. Thank you for being here today. And thanks for your service and for wanting to dive back into it. Based on the applications that come across the desk, which you saw in your first term, of course, how have you seen the arts, statewide, grow in the last 10 years?

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** The number of applications-- so I can only speak from 2010 to 2016, but they-- they did go up. And it's everything from, I mean, \$200-- we want to, you know, do a small arts project in our downtown-- to basic support grantees, Joslyn in Omaha, you know, this

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sort of thing. But yeah, I did notice an increase. And one of the things is, I had no idea about-- there is a lot of really neat art projects going on throughout the state in theater, in painting, in everything. And nobody really knows about it. Or at least I didn't. I shouldn't say nobody, but most Nebraskans don't know about it.

**HUNT:** Could it be, perhaps, that a way to grow the arts in the 3rd Congressional District and the rest of rural Nebraska is to designate arts districts?

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Yes. And I would be strong in-- in support of that. I'm aware of what that concept is. And I think that would be-- that would be welcome. Yes.

**HUNT:** Thank you. [LAUGHTER] That's all I have.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Hunt. Senator Moser.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Yes.

**MOSER:** That was a shameless plug. [LAUGHTER] I hope she's not listening. What percentage of apps are approved when people send in requests for funding for their event?

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** I don't know the answer to that, Senator, and it would be different from the type of grant. So, for example, one of our most popular programs throughout the state is, they pay a bus-- it's like a \$500 bus grant to transport students to places of art, whether it's a theater or a traveling exhibit or a main exhibit, things of that nature. Those are granted, I mean, outside of Omaha and Lincoln, 100 percent, and within Omaha and Lincoln, you know-- don't hold me to this, but very high. There are-- then when you move up into the grants that are a little bit bigger, the percentage might go down. But to tell you what, on the-- so if I've been on two art panels, grant panels a year, I would say that well over 90 percent of the applications are granted, mostly in full.

**MOSER:** Yeah, well, we-- I'm from Columbus and I've been on the Friends of Music Board in Columbus--

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Yeah.

**MOSER:** --and president of it a couple of times. And we've gotten a few grants from the Arts Council for various events we were doing if it was something special that we needed extra funding for. So just wanted

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to see what, you know, percentage, because I think we've only applied for a few, but it seems like we got some funding for almost all of them.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Uh-huh.

**MOSER:** So I was just curious, you know, how the percentages worked out.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Yeah.

**MOSER:** Thank you.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** You bet.

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Senator Moser. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for joining us here today, Mr. Laughlin.

**MARK LAUGHLIN:** Thank you.

**BRIESE:** Any proponent testifiers? Any opponent testifiers? Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none, that will close the confirmation hearing on Mr. Mark Laughlin. And with that, that should close our hearings for today. Thank you to everyone for joining us.