

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee May 21, 2019

_____ : Go ahead. Now you are.

BREWER: All right. Now you're up.

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37.

La GRONE: Andrew La Grone, District 49, Gretna and northwest Sarpy County.

M. HANSEN: Matt Hansen, District 26 northeast Lincoln.

BREWER: And coming in now we have Senator Blood and Senator Kolowski. Senator Blood, you're up on the mike. Introduction, sorry. Just your introduction is all.

BLOOD: All right. Hi, I'm Senator Carol Blood. I represent District 3, which is western Bellevue and southeastern Papillion, Nebraska.

BREWER: And Rick.

KOLOWSKI: Senator Kolowski, District 31, southwest Omaha.

BREWER: All right. And to my right is legal counsel Dick Clark. To my left on the end is committee clerk, Julie Condon. Our-- Nedhal will be our page today. Today we're going to have five appointments. Two will be via phone. The first one is already up and on the air for us here. We will have an Exec today after we're done. We won't have anybody-- well, we will have them. OK. I'd ask at this time if you have cell phones or electronic devices to mute them. Committee may be using electronic devices up here just to check on things. If you wish to record your attendance, the sheet is up there at the table. Well, I guess the ones that will be here already know who they are. If you have any materials to pass out just give those to the page. When you come up or in the case of these appointments all we need to do is state your name, state it clear so it can be recorded and, and spell your name, please. Then we'll go in the order on the sheet here, so the first one up will be Deb and, Deb, I'll give you a call-- a holler in just a second when we open up. Again, once we conclude our appointments we'll stay for an Exec. With that said, our first appointment is to the-- well, I guess they're all to Nebraska Tourism Commission. Let's see, Deb, are you still on the air?

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: I'm here.

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BREWER: OK. To begin, why don't we just start with you giving us a little background and so we can kind of get to know you.

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: OK. I am Debra Nelson-Loseke, I'm from Columbus, D-e-b-r-a N-e-l-s-o-n-L-o-s-e-k-e. I am currently the director at the Columbus County Convention and Visitors Bureau here in Columbus. I've been in that position for a little over 13 and a half years. I have served on the commission-- prior to becoming an official commissioner I was on the advisory committee. I am currently the past chair. I've served as chair for two years previous to that. I'm very involved in the state industry and also locally. And actually today I was supposed to be out on the golf course for state golf, but unfortunately the weather kind of screwed that up today.

BREWER: Well, and you want to hear us ask you questions, too, right?

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: That's right. That's right. Unfortunately, I was hoping it was going to be 70 degrees warmer, I was going to feel guilty for doing it. But yeah, but they're very active here in Columbus. [INAUDIBLE] You know we're hosting state golf today. I mean, we host state girls golf in the fall. So we do what we can. But it's very involved on the state level with Nebraska Travel Association, the Lincoln Highway Association, Southeast Nebraska Travel Council, and I have served in officerships of all of those. So just very important and I look forward to continuing to serve on the Nebraska Tourism Commission.

BREWER: All right. Thank you. Outstanding resume. We'll go around and questions from the committee? That's a good sign. If no one is asking questions it means you appear to be more than qualified for the position. One more time round. All right. Oh, yes, Senator Blood.

BLOOD: How are you this afternoon?

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: I'm just fine.

BLOOD: I just have a really brief question for you. I'm curious, do you think Nebraska's for everyone?

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: I'm sorry. What was that?

BLOOD: I am curious if you think that Nebraska is for everyone.

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: Obviously, we can offer something for everyone. And our new tourism slogan was definitely a tongue-in-cheek, but we

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certainly needed to-- we needed to wake up everyone to realize that Nebraska actually has-- it's a great tourism spot. We put a lot of research into that. We certainly did not-- our tourism staff and our research staff really worked hard to get drilled down to what effective message was going to work. In my years of experience I've never seen a tourism slogan get so much airtime when we hadn't spent a dime in advertising yet. So while-- and it wasn't designed for Nebraskans. It was designed to catch the attention of those outside of Nebraska, the ones that we need to come visit. So-- and we honestly, we're not a Disney World. If you're looking for Disney World we are not for you. So, yeah, Nebraskans aren't real fond of the, of the-- some Nebraskans aren't real fond of that brand, but is working and it has certainly caught the attention of Nebraska.

BLOOD: You said, it's working. We have statistics that show that people have come here or just ask for information?

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: Information. Our Web site hits have definitely increased, just our hits off social media. It's more about searching for information and just checking on it. I don't have the figures in front of me but--

BLOOD: No. And that was my understanding as well. I don't expect you to have that information. I was just curious to hear what you had to say about it. I didn't mean to put you on the spot. You're a good sport. Thank you very much.

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: No problem. And that's not the first time I've been asked that question.

BREWER: All right. At this time we'll open to anybody who would like to come up and testify in the positive in support. Oh, yes. And thank you for your opening introduction there so we can know better who you are. Is anybody here in opposition or in the neutral capacity? All right. Seeing none, if there are no other questions then, Debra, thank you and we appreciate your interest, especially on that last question, because a lot of us have wondered that. So have a good day. Thank you.

DEBRA NELSON-LOSEKE: All right. Thank you very much.

BREWER: OK. Second one will be via phone also and Star Lehl.

JULIE CONDON: She, she couldn't call in until we hung up with Ms. Loseke.

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BREWER: Oh. So we'll just stand by for a second and see if we get her to call in. So the first three are all to the Nebraska Tourism Commission the last two will be the State Personnel Board. So Senator Blood did, did you get to the heart on her answer?

BLOOD: It's the same information they all say. They need to give me a different answer eventually.

BREWER: All right. Star, are you on the line?

STAR LEHL: Yes, I am.

BREWER: All right. Thank you for calling in.

STAR LEHL: Yes, thank you for your time.

BREWER: Well, I understand that this lunch hour was our only time to really be free of the floor. So we appreciate you making the time to call in. If we could start by you just kind of giving us a-- an introduction to yourself and your background.

STAR LEHL: Sure. My name is Star Lehl. I was raised here in western Nebraska. We moved here when I was five years old. My dad was a major in the Marine Corps, I was born in Twentynine Palms, California, and he came to Scottsbluff to meet my mom when they were dating and fell in love with the area and said, when I retire I'm moving to Scottsbluff. So I moved here when I was five and I was-- I went to school here with Scottsbluff Public School, so I'm graduating with the class of 1976 and have just been very involved in both the Scottsbluff and Gering communities for all of my life. We moved to Gering shortly after we were married. I married my high school sweetheart and we lived in Gering for several years where I served on the city council for six years and then I was mayor of Gering for eight years. And went to work for the state of Nebraska Department of Economic Development and I worked for the state for about 15 years until I was offered a job here with the city of Scottsbluff and I serve as the economic development director at this time. So we have two grown children, one is here in the area, lives in Gering, and then our son lives in Illinois and trying to get him to move back here to the good life. But until then we are traveling to see our granddaughter there. And we have two granddaughters here in town. So that's a little bit about me and I live in a-- on a small acreage outside of Scottsbluff about 15 miles east, so our address is actually Minatare, Nebraska. But we have

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about 45 acres and buy horses and two dogs that keep us busy, so that's my life.

BREWER: Actually, it sounds pretty darn good and interesting because being from Gordon, of course, the place we went to the big city was Scottsbluff. You had a zoo, a YMCA, and an amazing taco place there. So-- and it was in Terrytown. So anyway. Yes, you're, you're, you're from my neck of the woods so you automatically have a special place in my heart. Let's run around the room real quick and see if there are any questions for you. All right. That's a good sign. And now we'll real quick see if there's any testifiers Are there any here to testify either in the support role, opposition, or neutral? All right. Seeing none, that was fairly painless. So we thank you for your information. We will Exec today and I'll-- myself or one the staff will give you a call and kind of confirm everything. But thanks again for calling in sharing all the information that we needed.

STAR LEHL: Thank you, Senator Brewer and the rest of the senators that are on the call today. I appreciate your vote of confidence and I have enjoyed my two years on the commission. I feel that we're starting to really work together and learn a little bit more. We've got a good director leading us at the time and I think you'll see some great things.

BREWER: All right. Thank you.

STAR LEHL: Thank you.

BREWER: You picked up on the U.S. Embassy part of that, didn't you?

KOLOWSKI: Yes, I did.

BREWER: OK. Just checking.

KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Semper Fi.

BREWER: OK. So those are our two call-ins. The next one-- let's see. Is Roger here? Ah, Roger, come on up. Welcome to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee.

ROGER JASNOCH: Thank you, Senator.

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BREWER: We'll move forward the same with you. Just simply state your name, spell it, and give us some background and then we'll see if we've got questions for you.

ROGER JASNOCH: Sure. Roger Jasnoch from Kearney, J-a-s-n-o-c-h. Just finished four years on the commission and here before you today to seek your reappointment-- of my reappointment. Represent District 8, which is part of central Nebraska. I've been at Kearney Visitors Bureau for 33 years as director. Prior to that I was in North Platte with the Chamber and Visitors Bureau for about five years and then prior to that I was at the York, York Chamber. I graduated from Kearney State College In 1975. While on the commission in concert with that I serve as the legislative chair of the Nebraska Travel Association and have been working with our lobbyist, Andy Pollock from Rembolt and Reinke-- Rembolt and Ludtke, excuse me. And so I've enjoyed working on the Tourism Commission. Tourism is Nebraska's third largest city [SIC] and I join about 36,000 people that go to work every day in the area of tourism. With that, I'd be glad to answer any questions, Senators.

BREWER: I guess we'll start by thanking you for your service. It's a lot of time and energy and effort to, to keep up with everything and so-- well, that's it. Questions? John Lowe.

LOWE: How did the Sandhill crane season end up this year? It looked like it was going to be a slow start that--

ROGER JASNOCH: It, it caught up. The birds were there in great numbers. We had some issues getting out to Rowe Sanctuary during the crane season so there are other places that we took people to accommodate. We always put a group together to look at the future and looking at next year to see what kinds of things that we can do. But it was-- it was a good season and we had lots of travel writers and lots of national and international exposure, as usual.

LOWE: You'll have to thank the cranes.

BREWER: Yeah. I imagine they were a little confused this year when they flew in and we seemed to have more water than they knew what to do with. All right. Additional questions? All right. With that said, we'll go ahead and take-- oh, yes, sir.

ROGER JASNOCH: Just one last comment. Appreciate all you senators do for making Nebraska a better place to live and work. And, no, that

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doesn't come without some sacrifice personally and professionally for each of you. And so thank you for making a difference.

BREWER: Well, thank you. There are times like this week when it does feel like you actually earn the money they give us here, so.

ROGER JASNOCH: Not enough.

BREWER: All right. Thank you.

ROGER JASNOCH: Thank you.

BREWER: Okay. At this time I'll take any testimony in the positive. OK. In the negative. Any in the neutral? All right. Seeing none, we will go ahead and close out the Nebraska Tourism part of this and transition to the State Personnel Board. Christopher, are you here? Come on up. Welcome to Government, Military and Veterans Affairs.

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: Thank you. I appreciate the time you're giving us this afternoon, keenly aware I'm standing between you and lunch, so. Hi. I'm Christopher Waddle, C-h-r-i-s-t-o-p-h-e-r W-a-d-d-l-e. I'm from Giltner, Nebraska, where I sit on the school board. I am currently the vice president of human resources at Central Community College in Grand Island. I have been on the Personnel Board for four years now, so this would be a reappointment. Originally appointed by Governor Heineman and sat here some time ago. I enjoy the area of human resources. The State Personnel Board has been very interesting. We only need about four or five times a year, but largely we go over grievances that have been filed by our employees either through their negotiated agreement or through the personnel, through any of the personnel procedures we have at the state. And then we assign a hearing officer and then we either adopt or modify the findings of the hearing officer. So it's been enjoyable, lots of learning, so.

BREWER: A quick question on the State Personnel Board. How many members are there?

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: There are five of us.

BREWER: OK. And besides your background being in HR with community college, is that similar with the others on the board or is there a pattern?

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: Well, my position is the human resources representative and I am also a Democrat appointed to the commission.

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But the rest of our board members, all of us are attorneys-- three of us are attorneys on the board and largely they come from the legal field. We do have a couple of folks who used to be part of the state of Nebraska Administrative Services Office.

BREWER: OK. All right, quick. Yes, Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. Thank you for coming today. I have a couple quick questions. They're not trick questions, I'd be interested in your opinion. So what would you say-- you say is the number one most important thing that this committee does?

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: The Government-- or sorry, the State Personnel Board?

BLOOD: Yes. Your committee. I'm sorry. Not my committee. I know what my committee does.

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: No. The, the State Personnel Board, most of the work has been attached to hearing of grievances. Recently though we approved the salary survey, which was not something we had done in the previous four years that I had been on the board. I also know that we are supposed to be approving the new policy manual that's coming down. However, they keep telling me that the Legislature keeps changing the rules a bit so it makes it hard to keep up with changing that. But, but when we get to that part of the work I think that'll be very important. But, but largely we've been just hearing the grievances they've been going through.

BLOOD: And so you had said that everybody that is on this-- that has been appointed to this board is attorneys. Are they HR attorneys?

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: No. We, we were all attorneys and then we had some transitioning with the board. But I know two of our members just practice in the area of employment law.

BLOOD: Can you kind of walk me through? Is there any type of parody on that committee? Are they all old men, all women? Any people of color?

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: With the people who-- no, there are no folks of color on the, on the committee. However with the approval of the two employments a day we would be two females and one-- and three men.

BLOOD: Very good. Thank you very much.

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BREWER: OK. Additional questions? Thank you for your testimony and we'll be getting ahold of you after we Exec.

CHRISTOPHER WADDLE: All right. Thank you.

BREWER: You bet. OK. Anybody here to testify in the affirmative? Anybody in opposition? Anybody in the neutral? All right. We'll close out on Christopher and, Sharon, come on up. Welcome to Government, Military and Veterans Affairs.

SHARON RUES: Thank you.

BREWER: You may begin whenever you're ready.

SHARON RUES: I may seem a little more long winded than others, so I apologize in advance, so. Good afternoon, Senators. My name is Sharon Rues, which is spelled S-h-a-r-o-n R-u-e-s, it's pronounced like Lewis with an "r." Thank you for the opportunity to present my credentials in support of being appointed to the State Personnel Board. My 16-plus years in human resources leadership experience that I've gained in the private sector at Mutual of Omaha and the government-- in government by serving in the state of Nebraska has well prepared me to contribute my expertise with a lot of strong integrity and ingrained ethics in my work. While working at Mutual of Omaha I developed my know-how in areas including, but not limited to: talent acquisition; employee relations; continuous improvement; performance management and ratings calibration; training and development; policy development; compensation fundamentals; and cultural assessment. All disciplines were supported on a national scale as well. Some of the key projects I've completed at-- when I was at Mutual. I streamlined a 100 percent paper onboarding process to an on-line HR portal and that enhancement reduced the work from one hour to complete down to eight minutes. I reengineered our new hire process from the application day to eliminating unnecessary steps and other waste and positively impacting the 50 percent first-day technology setup fail rate. And I also was write-- got the opportunity to write the corporate background policy to provide further depth and breadth integrating the new requirements for-- from the FDIC when Mutual of Omaha entered the banking market. During my employment with state government, I leveraged my strengths in executive coaching, performance management, labor relations, cultural studies, and agency merger management. In doing this I found the right cadence to support Governor Pete Ricketts' strategy for Nebraska and subsequently for director Kyle Schneeweis at the Department of Transportation. Some of the key projects that I worked

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on include: implementing the initial performance management tools in the executive branch, coaching the directors accordingly. I facilitated a cultural assessment of the Department of Corrections authoring the final project report based on qualitative and quantitative data, which was garnered through the research phase. And I also managed all aspects beyond the human resources element for the merger of the Department of Roads and the Department of Aeronautics and subsequently rebranding to the Department of Transportation. My credentials include my 2008 certification in human resources as a human resources management professional with the Society of Human Resources Management. I also have certifications in Lean Six Sigma; employee assessments; change management; and leadership training. In closing, the depth and breadth of my experience and expertise in human resources has well prepared me to serve the state on the State Personnel Board. If appointed, the state would benefit from my unbiased approach, courage, and candor. I have provided you copies of my resume to examine my experience further and I thank you for your consideration.

BREWER: All right. Thank you for your testimony. I am very impressed with your resume and you're not getting into the challenges of state government with blinders on, because you've already worked for the state of Nebraska and understand the pain that we go through sometimes but--

SHARON RUES: Correct.

BREWER: -- let's run around and check for questions. OK, that's an indicator that you're probably way overqualified so we don't know what to ask you. Anyway, all right. Thank you for your testimony and we'll real quick like run around and see if we have any quest-- or testifiers.

SHARON RUES: Thank you, Senators.

BREWER: OK. Anyone here to testify in the affirmative? Anyone testifying in opposition? Anyone testifying in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, we will close appointments. And, OK, with that, we'll go ahead and clear the room. We'll go into Exec. What's that? Motion to go into Exec. And a second?

La GRONE: Second.

BREWER: Second here.