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BRIESE: I think we're going to go-- I think we're going to go ahead and get started here, keep things moving. And welcome to the General Affairs Committee. My name is Tom Briese. I'm the Senator for District 41. I'm the Chair of this committee and will be conducting today's hearing. We're here today for the purpose of conducting a hearing on seven appointments. For the safety of our committee members, staff, pages and the public, we ask those attending our hearings to abide by the following procedures. We request that everyone utilize the identified entrance and exit doors to the hearing room. Pages will-- well, I guess we don't have pages to sanitize, do we? Typically, we sanitize between testifiers. It doesn't look like we have that option today. We ask that you please limit or eliminate handouts. If you wish to testify other than as an introducer 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 by the entrance. 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 the proceedings is that the introducer will be given an opportunity to open. Then we will hear from any proponents, opponents and any neutral testifiers. We ask that you listen very carefully, try not to be repetitive. We use the light system. Each testifier will be allowed three minutes to testify. As far as introducers yourselves, you can have more than that, but other testifiers will be limited to three minutes. When the yellow light comes on, you have one minute remaining. We ask that you begin concluding your remarks. Red light comes on, time's expired. We will open it up to any questions from the committee members. 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're just [INAUDIBLE] before us. At this time, I'd like to have the members of the Committee introduce themselves, starting with Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: John Cavanaugh, District 9, midtown Omaha.

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

LOWE: John Lowe, District 37, Kearney, Gibbon and Shelton.

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LAURIE HOLMAN: I'm Laurie Holman, I'm agency with-- not agency. I'm
committee legal counsel, sorry.

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

ALEX DeGARMO: Alex DeGarmo, committee clerk.

BRIESE: OK. And first up, we will have a couple of folks phoning in--
a couple of nominees. And so we'll begin with them and we will begin
with Pamela Snow, correct? Good afternoon, Ms. Snow, are you on the
line?

PAMELA SNOW: I am on the line. Good afternoon to all of you.

BRIESE: Very good. I'm Tom Briese, Chair of the General Affairs
Committee. I'm here with-- here with my fellow committee members.
We're here for the purpose of conducting a hearing on your appointment
to the Nebraska Arts Council. And here in a second, we'd like to have
you introduce yourself to the committee and tell us anything about
yourself for this appointment that you'd like to share. And then
please stay on the line for any potential questions from the committee
members or to hear any other testimony that might occur on your
appointment here. But at this time, I'd like to have you go ahead and
tell us about yourself.

PAMELA SNOW: Well, I am Pamela Snow, and I was a founding board member
of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, which, you know, is the private
part of a public private partnership with the state of Nebraska to
support the arts and humanities in Nebraska. Later on, after we sort
of got the organization moving forward, I was named executive
director. And in that capacity, I worked very closely with the
Nebraska Arts Council and, of course, Humanities Nebraska. But my
office was housed in the same building as the Nebraska Arts Council so
my experience with the Nebraska Arts Council has been probably
atypical because I was, of course, charged with representing them
through the Nebraska cultural endowment across the state of Nebraska.
And I have to say that it was a fabulous experience working with
Suzanne and her staff and then talking to grantees across the state.
It just was a-- it was a very, very good experience because people
across the state really evaluate the arts and they know their value
and they work towards the Arts Council as some-- as an organization
for support, advice and and knowledge. And so that's my relationship

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to the Arts Council. I just have the utmost admiration for Suzanne and her staff because they just do an excellent job. I've also served over a period of 15 years. I've served on three grant panels and so I'm a little familiar with that process. And I quite honestly, I retired in 2014 and I kind of thought my-- my time was over for being selected or appointed to the Nebraska Arts Council, but I'm thrilled that I have been. Previously my husband and I had a business in central Nebraska for 26 years and, you know, I-- I-- it was a floral and gift store. And then I moved to the Lincoln area where I grew up and now we live in Ashland, so that's the short story.

BRIESE: OK, very good. Thank-- thank you for that. And at this time, I'd like to ask my fellow committee members if they have any questions of you. Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Briese. Thank you, Ms. Snow, for calling in and being willing to serve on the Arts Council. I just have a general question. What does the Arts Council do?

PAMELA SNOW: Well, they do a lot of things, and you know, of course, they have a grant cycle that nonprofit art organizations can apply for funding for specific projects. We also have an artist-- an artist roster, they call it, of teaching artists to go out to the schools and we'll do a segment on a particular artistic project. It may be music, it may be painting, it may be poetry. And then we also have the touring artist. Our state poet would be on that cycle as a touring artist. Excuse me, I've got to cough. You know, and of course, they monitor the galleries in the Governor's mansion and in the Fred Simon Gallery down at the office, which has been a really wonderful asset to both working artists in for a show, an artist who may not have had that opportunity and to show their work. But I think what is the most exciting is what just happened in the Legislature, your-- the artistic-- the creation of the creative districts that your Senators passed. And thank you very much. It just seems to me a very natural and logical step from what we have done with the cultural endowment together to now have this to really, really fire up the cultural opportunities across the state, so I thank you for that.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK, thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh, and thank you for your answer there. Anyone else? Seeing no other questions, we thank you for

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calling in today, Ms. Snow. And at this point, I'd open up to any
proponent testifiers in support of the nomination. Seeing none, any
opponent testifiers? Seeing none, any neutral testifiers? Seeing none.
And with that, Ms. Snow, that will close the hearing on your
appointment to the Nebraska Arts Council. Thank you again for your
willingness to serve and for calling in.

PAMELA SNOW: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity.

BRIESE: You bet. Have a good day.

PAMELA SNOW: Bye bye. Yeah, you too. Thank you.

BRIESE: That will close the hearing on Ms. Snow. We'll open the
hearing on Mr. Boyd Pedersen's appointment to the State Electrical
Board, and we have a call in. Good afternoon, Mr. Pedersen.

BOYD PEDERSEN: That is correct.

BRIESE: Yes, I'm Tom Briese. I'm Chair of the General Affairs
Committee. I'm here with my fellow members of the committee. We're
here for the purpose of conducting a hearing on your appointment to
the State Electrical Board. In a moment here, we'd like to have you
introduce yourself to the committee. Tell us anything about yourself
or this appointment or anything you'd like to share with us, and then
please stay on the line for any questions that we might have. So at
this point, I'd like to have you introduce yourself and tell us what
you would like.

BOYD PEDERSEN: I'm Boyd Pedersen. I've been an electrical contractor
in Nebraska since 1984, and, oh, I've got two sons in the business and
each one of them have a workshop. One is at Phillips, Nebraska and the
other one is at Clearwater. We have satellites around with our tech
people and whatnot. Our primary business is grain elevators. We have
large-- oh, large feedlots. Pretty much ag related as far as on the
upside down from ag. We do prolong, underground, boring, [INAUDIBLE]
all those pieces and we also do [INAUDIBLE] voltaic. Got started when
I was a junior in high school 45 years ago. So I'm [INAUDIBLE] with
that. Otherwise, we have our large base, an industrial electrical,
technologies, data process, all that and [INAUDIBLE] very blessed. And
we're always on the-- always on the [INAUDIBLE]. We have anywhere from
25 to 30 employees, just like everybody else could use more.

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BRIESE: Sure. Well, thank-- thank you for that, sir. And at this point, I'd like to open it up for any questions from my fellow committee members. Senator Arch.

ARCH: Thank you, and thank you for your willingness to serve. I-- I also serve on the Health and Human Services Committee and one of the questions that we're asking people that come for an appointment because we're trying to determine how we're doing in-- in recruitment for these positions. How-- how did you become aware of the opening?

BOYD PEDERSEN: Oh, I was asked by several inspectors. We-- we cover the state. We-- our area of service predominantly is obviously, Nebraska, Iowa and Kansas. And so we know a broad brush range of inspectors in Nebraska. And several of them asked me and I've been asked by, oh, several of the executive directors and chief inspectors over the years, too, and I just brushed them off. This time, I told them, yeah.

ARCH: Oh, great. Well, thank you for saying yes. But we appreciate-- we appreciate that you obviously have a-- have a very deep background in electrical in issues, so thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Arch. Any other questions? Seeing no other questions, I would open it up to any proponent testifiers, any opponent testifiers? Seeing none, any neutral testifiers? Seeing none. Mr. Pedersen, I think that wraps us up here today. We thank you for calling in and appreciate your willingness to serve and with that, we'll close the hearing on your appointment. and you have a good day.

BOYD PEDERSEN: All right. Thanks, sirs.

BRIESE: You bet. Thank you. And with that, we will open the hearing on Mr.-- the appointment of Mr. Kurt Griess to the State Electrical Board. And excuse me for my pronunciation. You can--

KURT GRIESS: Right.

BRIESE: Was it? Good. Very good.

KURT GRIESS: Can I come forward?

BRIESE: Yes. Yes. Welcome-- welcome. Good afternoon and welcome. Have a seat and feel free to share with us what you would like.

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KURT GRIESS: Good afternoon. I see a few familiar faces and a lot of them that I don't know, but my name is Kurt Griess. I'm an electrical inspector for 14 years now from the City of Grand Island. Been in the electrical field full-time about 25 years. Got out of school, was going to-- went to college part-time, was involved in a farming operation and when the farm farming operation didn't work, I chose that full-time position of doing electrical work. I've been very active throughout the state and I think maybe I was asked to participate or put my-- my willingness to participate of being on the State Electrical Board because I did ask a lot of questions and-- and wanted to see more consistency throughout the state, which I saw great improvement just as of late. But a lot of it is-- it's an interesting situation that we have throughout the state that we have the State Electrical Board and we have the state electrical division and then we have municipalities below them, and for many years there was no communication throughout. So when as a municipality we adopt our codes, which we adopted the 2020 code expecting the state to adopt it a year ago already, and we had the process in place a long time ago already that we thought we were going to be lagging behind them. But that's what happens with municipalities, is they follow the state, but they don't know where the state is, for sure what the State Electrical Act and some of the confusion of some of the interpretation and stuff. And that has greatly improved as of late. And I'm glad that I'm able to be part of that.

BRIESE: OK, very good. Thank you. Any questions? Senator Arch.

ARCH: Thank you. Thanks for willingness to serve. Codes, that's what you reference there. What about-- what about the ability to practice in electrical? In other words, state has requirements and I understand municipalities may have separate requirements, is there-- is there anything that the board that-- that is-- is talking about trying to reconcile some of those issues?

KURT GRIESS: I-- I got to say, the division is just starting and I think the board will go that way of working a little bit more with the municipalities. And since I'm on the board, I probably will share a lot of my concerns and some of the things that I got. But, yeah, it's-- it's a state electrical license and registration for apprentices. Like in Grand Island, like most municipalities, we don't license, we register those licenses. So it does fall back on the state

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board for them to have the proper documentation and licensing to do
the work.

ARCH: Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you. Thank you, Senator Arch. Any other questions?
Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Chairman Briese. Thank you for testifying today. So
what is the condition of electrical contracting in the state of
Nebraska? And by that, I mean, if you were a young man today, would
you be enticed to come to Nebraska or would you go to Kansas or Iowa
or Missouri? And what can we do to make that better as a state?

KURT GRIESS: I-- I guess as a state, I mean, we've got plenty of work.
I mean, we've got many contractors. I-- I guess if you want to do it
reputable and do it to the code and be-- and take some pride in your
work, I mean, what I've saw and heard, you know, you're going to be--
want to be in Nebraska because we've got a state electrical division
and we have a standard that we stand to. You go into Kansas, you have
municipalities and you have counties in different places that have
some regulation, but unfortunately, you know, being in the inspection
field myself and being an inspector, most of our time is spent on
probably 1 percent of the people that we have the issues with and the
problems with that have violations and stuff. So it's a pride thing. I
mean, yeah, we need--I mean, as in all construction, the people are
not available. We, in Grand Island, have 100 contractors registered. I
mean, really, we don't need the contractors and the owners of the
businesses, we need the laborers. I mean, that's-- that's where the
major need is. I mean, and that's interesting to see that, you know,
Grand Island's not a large community, but of decent size, but, yeah,
we've got more registered contractors than journeymen, which would be
workers along with-- there are the apprentices that would also be
laborers that could help them. But yeah, we have a large variation of
the different sides, contractors and the different people that could
actually do the work.

BRANDT: So is there anything in the rules that we have now that we
could change to bring more journeymen into the state?

KURT GRIESS: I don't know if there's really anything that's-- that's
going to help to bring those people to the state. Unfortunately, I

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think it's just like everything, you know, and people are going into other fields besides with their hands. You know, they don't want to be tradesmen. A lot of the younger people are not coming back to go out to build houses, to plumb them, to do the mechanical work. Electrical is-- is a-- as an industry, there is a shortage.

BRANDT: All right. Thank you.

KURT GRIESS: You're welcome.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for being here today. Thank you for your willingness to serve and that-- I'll open it up to any proponent testifiers. Seeing none. Opponent testifiers, seeing none. Neutral testifiers, seeing none. Thank you again, and that will conclude the hearing on your appointment to the State Electoral Board.

KURT GRIESS: Thank you.

BRIESE: Next we'll open up the hearing on the appointment of Ann Michelle Dudley to the Nebraska Arts Council. Go ahead and step forward.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Hello.

BRIESE: Hi, good afternoon and welcome.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Thank you.

BRIESE: Please share with us what you would like.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: OK. And I go by Michelle, but I have to have Ann in there because that's my first name and so it just has to be on all documents. So I am from Norfolk, Nebraska. I was from Lincoln originally, but I've lived in Norfolk for the last 30 years and I've been involved in the arts for the 30 years that I've been there. I was on the Nebraska-- the Norfolk Arts Center and then I was also president of the Arts Center. I've seen directly the impact that economic-- the impact economically of being able to have the Nebraska Arts Council do our basic support grant for our Arts Center. We're able to bring in 8,000 preschool to junior high students for live performances from nationally recognized venues. And this is sometimes the only thing that these kids are going to see for the arts and

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just-- so that's my passion. It's just getting arts to the kids. I'm also on the Nebraska Cultural Endowment. I've been there-- this is my fifth year. And so being a part of where I see the funding part of it and then now going to be able to be a part of seeing the granting process and just how that all works and funding new artists, funding communities, funding services. So my husband has a family business, I guess it's our family business, fourth generation, Appera. I am a speech pathologist by trade and we have two sons, one's in Chicago and the other is in Omaha. So that's me in a nutshell.

BRIESE: OK, very good. Thank you for that.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Sure.

BRIESE: Any questions? Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, Chairman Briese, and thank you, Ms. Dudley, for your willing service, for being here. So you said you were on the Cultural Endowment and the Cultural Endowment, I guess Ms. Snow also talked about that, right? Was she-- was she on that as well?

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: She's not on it now, but she was

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. And that's private money that goes to the arts, is that right?

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Private and then it's matched by the state, so.

J. CAVANAUGH: The state matches the money that we give out to the Arts Council over time, right?

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Right.

J. CAVANAUGH: And that's a grant application process.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Yes.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: And so the-- and I want to thank you for passing the budget that doubled the amount that goes to the Nebraska Cultural Endowment from 500,000 matching to a million. And I mean, just to see how we were able to increase what we gave to the communities around

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the state during the pandemic, you know, especially being up in northeast Nebraska, I mean, some of our small art centers and venues would not have survived and so it's just on my heart. You know, I think in Lincoln and Omaha, yes, they get a good piece of the pie, but they also have the population base where they're able to get a lot more donations. And I don't think we would survive without the support from the Cultural Endowment and the Nebraska Arts Council.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Cavanaugh. Any other questions? Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Chairman Briese.. Thank you, Ms. Dudley, for appearing today. Being from a small town myself, what are some of the programs that you foresee for some of our smallest communities in the state?

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: So that the touring-- the Nebraska Touring Program is wonderful because we're able to at a smaller price bring in different performing artists and visual artists. In Norfolk, we have the prime time reading, which is through the library program, where it's a reading program for-- kind of at-risk students and things. We have the comedy festival, the Johnny Carson that we do every summer, and that's partially funded. You know, just even up in the smaller towns like Bassett and O'Neill and some of their programs, you know, they wouldn't survive without this funding. And so being part of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, you know, it was important to me not just to be on the council, but then my husband and I also support it monetarily too. So did that help to answer your question a little bit?

BRANDT: I think so. Thank you.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: Sure.

BRIESE: Thank you. Senator Brandt. Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for appearing here today. Thank you for your willingness to serve. And I would open up to any proponent testifiers, opponent testifiers, neutral testifiers. Seeing none that will conclude the hearing on your appointment. Thank you.

ANN MICHELLE DUDLEY: All right. Thank you for your time.

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BRIESE: And with that, we will open the hearing on the appointment of Sharon Hofschire to the Nebraska Arts Council. Good afternoon and welcome.

SHARON HOF SCHIRE: Welcome to you. Thank you all very much for your time. I'm known as Shari, so I'll go by that.

BRIESE: Sure.

SHARON HOF SCHIRE: I have been involved in my personal life, my professional life, and my volunteer life in education in the arts forever and ever. My-- I retired just a few years ago from teaching at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. I taught art history, but I was also involved-- involved in arts education. I directed a program that was a graduate program for first year teachers on how to integrate the arts into the regular classroom curriculum. And then I also have done workshops across the state and I can just go right down the line and have been in all of your areas with-- both with the director of the Prairie Visions Workshop, which was an arts integration workshop a week long that we did for teachers from across the state, not just our teachers, but elementary, secondary, counselors, the administration, the whole bit. And I also just finished about four or five years ago doing workshops across the state on the new fine arts standards, which were passed by the state board. And-- and it was amazing how many people would drive for hours to come to get this kind of information. So I have been the recipient of grants from the Arts Council over many years, so I've had a chance to observe them up close. I've been on grant panels and all. And in kind of an answer just to Senator Cavanaugh's question before, about what the Arts Council does, I think that they are the organizer and the creator of so many of the programs that we have, the creative districts that, again, you all funded wonderfully. It's going to be so exciting in all of these-- all of the various communities in Nebraska on what they're going to be able to do with this money and what that's going to do for the cities. But also the-- the Arts Council sat back and said, OK, we know we're going to get some of this CARES money nationally, so they asked all of the arts organizations across the state, what do you need it the most for? And that's what they gave them. They had online every week. They would do Zoom sessions to address the problems that individual community cultural organizations were going through during COVID and how they could help. So it was observed how the Arts Council has made with their funding their decisions has made a tremendous impact in

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communities throughout the state. And as like I said, as a recipient of some of those grants myself and being involved, I'd like to be on this board because I-- I want to pay back. And now that I'm retired, I've got the time to do that. Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you for that. Any questions? Senator Arch.

ARCH: Thank you. Thanks for being here. With regards to specific criteria for the granting of the awards and I don't mean-- I don't mean the COVID money, but-- but just your regular awards. Is-- are there specific criteria? How does-- how do you decide? I mean, I'm sure there's a lot of great ideas and great projects. How do you decide?

SHARON HOFSCHIRE: Well, first of all, one of the things is that the grant panels are made up of individuals that represent a great diversity. And I don't just mean ethnic diversity, although that's part of it, but also geographic diversity from across the state, age, handicapped, all-- from the various-- the various art forms, so everything is represented. And then all of the grants are looked at as to the appropriateness of the amount of money that they're asking for in relation to what they're going to do, the appropriateness of-- of it to the community, to Nebraska, the importance of it. Who is going to add benefit and that who is going to benefit also has to be inclusive of all of those various factors, so it's not just all grouped into one place, but that there are more people benefiting from it. So, yeah, yes, there are definitely different guidelines that you look at with the grants, but at the same time, you look at the individuality of each of the grantees who-- small, big, whatever they may be, they're-- you know, you have to-- you can't judge a small organization by the same way that you judge a larger one. So you take everything into consideration. It was really a lot of work. The first time I did it, I started reading my-- all my materials on the grants about a week before. I should have started three weeks before, you know, it-- it was a lot more to absorb.

ARCH: Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Arch. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for your testimony.

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SHARON HOF SCHIRE: Thank you. And thank you all for the creative
districts.

BRIESE: Thank you. You bet. Thank you for your willingness to serve

SHARON HOF SCHIRE: Thank you.

BRIESE: Any proponent testimony, opponent testimony, neutral
testimony? Seeing none, that will conclude the hearing on the
appointment of Shari Hofschire to the Nebraska Arts Council. And with
that, we will open the hearing on Brenda Davis to the Nebraska Arts
Council.

BRENDA DAVIS: Hello.

BRIESE: Good afternoon and welcome.

BRENDA DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you. My name is Brenda. I originally am
from Nebraska, so I was-- my parents were living in Ceresco, Saunders
County, when I was born, and I would take the bus to Wahoo. I then
moved to Lincoln and graduated from Southeast High School in Lincoln
and then decided to leave and never come back. I went to Chicago
because I wanted to major in theater and so that was wonderful. Four
years of college at Loyola University, I discovered set design in
theater. I previously thought it was performance because while I was
in high school, sort of wasn't aware of that designing was an option.
Even though my art teacher I remember in high school said, Brenda, you
have a talent for drawing. You should use drawing somehow in your
career. I was very flattered, but totally disregarded his advice until
later when he was right all along and I became a designer, which sort
of combines my interest with theater and my interest in drawing. After
that, let's see, I met my husband in Chicago and he and I remained
there. We got married right after-- well, three more years. We lived--
he was going to law school while I was freelancing in Chicago and then
we got married and it was my turn to go back to school for my advanced
degree and I went to Yale for set design in theater. So I spent three
years in New Haven, Connecticut, and then another year freelancing as
a designer there as well. Let's see. In college, my mentor in college
is a set designer who has a pretty busy professional career as a set
designer and so I was his assistant, his associate for many years and
was able to go to Australia with his shows, all around the United
States. And I also recently-- well, it's not recently anymore, but I

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went to Milan to just-- he wasn't able to be there. So I was in Milan setting up his-- his set design for a show that had come from the Metropolitan Opera in New York and traveled there again to the La Scala, which is the Opera House in Milan. So I got to spend about a month there putting that show's set design in. Grad school was finishing and we decided to start having kids and I'm here today because of that. My mother still lives in Lincoln and my stepfather and my dad is still in Wahoo. And as soon as I started having kids, I have three daughters, it became really clear to me that my priorities had shifted and the place to raise your kids became so much more important to me than this fancy career that was in my future. Not that it couldn't still happen. Since I've been in Nebraska, I've designed shows at Oregon, Shakespeare and Baltimore, Center Stage and just here at the High School at Southeast, I've been back. We just did Little Women. So I did a set design here in the-- at the high school there. Um, I live in Beatrice. My kids are all there. Let's see. One just graduated from kindergarten, one from fifth grade and one is in sixth, will be in seventh next year, which is very hard to believe. They are all involved in music. So my husband was a Suzuki piano and violin player as a child and I was fascinated with that. I always wanted to be involved in music. So they're doing Suzuki violin and piano and we practice every single day. Well, we're supposed to practice every single day. And the one thing I wanted to say sort of on topic of like the importance of the arts, is that it tends to seem that parents are very willing to spend extra money on sports and extra money on tutors for the very linear educational, you know, topics. It tends to be that when it comes to the arts, I think the-- from the outside, it seems like you're either talented or you're not. And I do believe that the extra resources that a parent might provide to their child for the arts has a lot to do with whether they'll be successful, because it does take work. It does take practice, it does take guidance and actually exploring that part of your brain that can really, truly learn how to draw, regardless of what you think your talents might be, you can actually learn how to draw. It engages a different part of your brain than the sciences and math and those kinds of educations. So I really-- I'm brand new to the Arts Council, but I really, truly believe that the funding that goes into it and the opportunities for students, it fosters maybe a shred of talent, but more importantly, a long-term opportunity to engage with students whose parents might not think of that as a-- as a permanent or valued area of expertise.

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BRIESE: OK, very good. Appreciate that insight. Any questions? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: Thank you, Chairman. Real quick, Milan, Yale, how did you end up with Doane?

BRENDA DAVIS: Doane College, I taught there a few semesters. Their set design and TD professor gets a sabbatical every six years. I didn't say I teach now at the University of Nebraska, and I joked, part time. So I-- Mr. Stander at Doane College, Doane is a wonderful place to teach. They get a sabbatical every six years or seven years. And so they had me fill in those few semesters for him, so.

BREWER: I'm a Doane graduate.

BRENDA DAVIS: Oh, go Tigers.

BREWER: [INAUDIBLE].

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Senator Brandt, do you have your hand up?

BRANDT: Yes, thank you, Chairman Briese. Thank you, Ms. Davis, for being here today. I live 10 miles west of Beatrice.

BRENDA DAVIS: Oh, wonderful.

BRANDT: And to me, Beatrice is the big town compared to anything else down there. So sort of following up on the question that I asked before, and you've been in the community a long time, how do we-- how do we apply the arts to Beatrice and Fairbury and Plymouth and all these other small towns? What's your vision?

BRENDA DAVIS: Oh, man, I have-- I have lots of thoughts about that. How can that-- how can that be encouraged? You know, I see different-- different small towns with arts programs happening, you know, Marysville with their-- with their squirrels and, you know, Taylor with their-- I think it was Taylor that had to like painted profiles of the-- of the different historical figures. And I just believe that the arts are sort of a salve for the hardest parts of life. And so to see art in the community is such a refreshing thing and I hope that you all experience that during-- during COVID, you know, at home that's the saddest part of life is so lifted about-- regarding, you

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know, someone who took-- took something that's difficult and turned it into something artistic sort of lifts the soul. So I think about that in Beatrice a lot. We just did sort of a mural there. We're doing-- the community theater there does quite well. There are-- there are things, but I'm-- constantly it's on my mind. I don't know if I have any really good answers except that, oh, gosh, if you know any music teachers, I drive to Lincoln twice a week for music lessons. And my goal is to encourage someone, some student of the-- of the music school to come down to Beatrice and make more of a career there teaching music in particular.

BRANDT: And I've got one follow-up question--

BRENDA DAVIS: Sure.

BRANDT: --because you'll be the only set designer in my entire life I'll ever get to talk to. On this-- on this impressive list that you submitted, which one of these sets was the most difficult to do?

BRENDA DAVIS: Gosh, I don't even know what's on that list anymore. Let's see, the most difficult. I think there's some associate work on there and there's some of my own work on there. One of the most difficult was Milan, was the show Lucia di Lammermoor Donizetti Opera, the language barrier was steep. It encouraged me to come home and immediately learn another language, which I have not. I've sort of failed that, but-- but-- but it really-- it was-- it was a challenge to discuss things in an artistic term, if I didn't know their language, to describe the feeling, the goal of the set and why a certain note that I was giving them was important to me when English wasn't their first language. That was very challenging. Of course it came with such a wonderful opportunity for education for myself of Milan and Italy in general, so it was wonderful. That giant challenge came with some of the greatest benefits that I've experienced, so.

BRANDT: Thank you.

BRENDA DAVIS: Thank you.

BRIESE: Thank you. Senator Brandt. Any other questions? Seeing none, thank you for being here today. Thank you for your willingness to serve. Any proponent testifiers, opponent testifiers, neutral

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testifiers? And with that, we will conclude the hearing on your
appointment.

BRENDA DAVIS: Thanks.

BRIESE: Thanks again. And now we will open up the hearing on the
appointment of Zachary Cheek to the Nebraska Arts Council. Please step
forward. Good afternoon, and welcome.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Hi, Mr. Chairman, hi, Senators. Thanks for having me
today. So do I just start?

BRIESE: You bet. Go right ahead--

ZACHARY CHEEK: OK.

BRIESE: --and tell what you'd like to.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Well, hi. I'm a-- I'm an appointee by Governor Ricketts
to Nebraska Arts Council. If confirmed by the Legislature, I will be
the youngest member of the Nebraska Arts Council in history. I heard
about this opportunity from my friend and predecessor, Steven Bader,
who-- and I discussed with him the possibility of serving on the Arts
Council. And I didn't know if I was very qualified. I mean, I'm a
music-- I'm a 20-year-old music major. But I reached out to Steven and
he was very supportive of the idea. And then I needed another
reference and the Dean of my Fine Arts College at UNL, Dean O'Connor,
agreed to sign on as a reference to the Governor. So that's when I
started thinking, you know, maybe I do have something to contribute as
a young Nebraskan interested in government. So I applied to Nebraska
Arts Council in August and to my surprise, was actually accepted. And
so I've been a member since October 28 with a 3-year term. My first
meeting was February 8, I believe, and it was great. It was over Zoom
but I was so excited to be a member of the Nebraska Arts Council, I
sat down with Shari-- with Dr. Hofschire, over Zoom and I said, what
can I do to be a productive member of the Nebraska Arts Council? And I
said, you know, I've been reading all these art history books and I've
been poring over all this stuff and she said, I'm an art historian and
that's great, Zach, but you don't need to know art history to be on
the Nebraska Arts Council. So I said, OK. She said, you know, provide
oversight, provide perspective, provide insight on how we can be doing
better with your experiences as a young musician. And I'll tell you

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about my background as a musician in a second. And so I took that and I took notes on that and I took that with me. And then I sat down with-- who else? I sat down with the director of the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Kyle Cartwright, and I said to him, how can I be a productive member of the Nebraska Arts Council? And he said, use your first year and spend your time learning the programs, learning the operations, learning the finances of Nebraska Arts Council, and then use your second two years and really branch out and be able to contribute more to the Arts Council. And it's almost six months to the day after my-- or seven months to the day after my appointment. And I took that with me as well. And then I sat down with Nebraskans for the Arts, the advocacy organization with a wonderful girl named Skyler Dykes, who's only about two or three years older than me, just graduated from UNL, and I said to her, how can I be the most productive member of the Nebraska Arts Council that you've ever seen? And she provided insight about how in my capacity as a private west Omahan I could be, you know, keeping up to date on bills in the Legislature. I sent Senator Hilkemann a letter about the amendment by Senator Flood increasing the amount of funding for cultural districts from 100,000 to a million. And I said, Senator, I was very upset that you voted no. I want my senator to be supportive of the arts. He replied, Zachary, I was really surprised by your email, as someone who likes to support the arts, I'm on appropriations and I didn't want to put the budget at risk. Hope that helps. Yeah, so that happened. But what else? But I'm just interested in being a productive member of the Nebraska Arts Council and I don't know how many of you will be lucky enough to see in three years if I'm reappointed by the next Governor, but in addition to being the youngest member of the Nebraska Arts Council, I would like to be held accountable to this. That I will be the hardest working member of Nebraska Arts Council in history, that I'll be sitting down with people and bringing perspectives that I can bring to the Arts Council and bring to its programs, that I am a person who loves the arts and who loves Nebraska and is being given this opportunity to combine the two. And as you might have known, Senators, I wrote each of you a letter saying pretty much the same thing, saying, you know, I want to be a productive member of the Nebraska Arts Council. You're on the committee that oversees it, how can I be a better member, in your opinion? And so, Senator Cavanaugh, whether you have more questions about the Arts Council or Senator Brewer, I can tell you're bursting at the seams seeing all these great Arts Council nominees just bursting with excitement. But, you know, I

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really just want to be contributing to the arts. And then in terms of a little background information, forgive me for overstepping that. I'm from Elkhorn. My mother is a refugee from Soviet Afghan-- from Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; 39 years ago, 39 years and one week ago, my family's been in this country. I was born and raised in west Omaha. What else? I went to Oakland High School and I wasn't very interested in music when I went to Oakland High, but at Elkhorn Middle School, it was my band director, an amazing man by the name of Chris Johnson, who kept me interested in the arts and kept me interested enough to go on to high school and find out that all these kids who are really good musicians are really popular at Elkhorn High. So I started studying with a member of the Omaha Symphony and I got to the point where I said, you know, after three or four years I was making all these different honors organizations and music organizations and music schools are reaching out to me, and I said, you know, I can't be as involved as I want to be in college without being a music major. So I ended up going to University of Nebraska-Lincoln studying, and I'm still studying there with a trombone professor. I'm going to be a senior this coming year. I'm a double major in economics and drama performance. I'm a member of the honors program. I'm the student senator for the College of Fine and Performing Arts. And I am really interested in combining my experiences as a student and as a musician and as an Omahan and as someone who is interested in government to serving Nebraskans through the Arts Council.

BRIESE: OK.

ZACHARY CHEEK: So, I mean-- forgive me. One more thing, but it's just amazing how much the Nebraska Arts Council does, because even after I've been a member, you understand that, you know, have a couple of million dollars in the budget they partner with these organizations, are supported by these senators. But it was like the other day, I was driving from East Campus and I passed the quilt there-- the National Quilt Museum, and I saw on the front-- on their electronic sign, thank you, Nebraska Arts Council, for your support. And then I went to the Lied Center that night and I was sitting with my friend watching a Canadian brass quintet and it says, projected on the wall, thank you, Nebraska Arts Council, for your support. And so whether it's Turner Park or SumTur Theater or new buildings at UNK, I really think the Nebraska Arts Council does a great service for Nebraskans, and I'm excited to be contributing to that.

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BRIESE: OK, well, very good. Thank you for that.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Thank you, sir.

BRIESE: Any questions? Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Zachary, for being here today.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Of course.

LOWE: You realize this is a lifetime appointment? [LAUGHTER] It's a long--

ZACHARY CHEEK: Yes, yes, sir. No, Nebraska Arts Council's 15 members, five from every congressional district, I'm pretty much cemented in Omaha now, so.

LOWE: To more.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Yeah, no, three years you got me. No, just kidding now. Looking forward to serving or spending many years as a musician in Nebraska.

BRIESE: Good. Thank you, Senator Lowe. Anyone else? Senator Brewer.

BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And Zach just-- just so you understand, if I don't look incredibly motivated it isn't because I was motivated--

ZACHARY CHEEK: I was yanking your chain, sir.

BREWER: At 7:30 this morning, I was under the care of the UNMC folks getting bone marrow pulled out my hip and so it's about all I can do to stay conscious--

ZACHARY CHEEK: I'm so sorry.

BREWER: --to hear you.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Talk about faux pas, thank you for being here.

BREWER: Oh, you're fine. You are the most motivated person we've ever had in here that I've seen, so congratulations there.

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ZACHARY CHEEK: I'd ask my friend to keep the coffee away from me.

_____ : Yeah [INAUDIBLE]

BRIESE: Thank you, Senator Brewer. Anyone else? Seeing no other questions, thank you again for your willingness to serve and thank you for being here.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Thank you, sir.

BRIESE: Anyone else? Seeing no other questions, thank you again for your willingness to serve and thank you for being here.

ZACHARY CHEEK: Thank you, sir.

BRIESE: Any proponent testifiers, opponent testifiers, neutral testifiers? And that will conclude the hearing on the appointment of Zachary Cheek to the Nebraska Arts Council. And that will wrap up our hearings for today. Thank you, everyone, for being here and your willingness to serve. Have a good day.