

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Health and Human Services Committee August 6, 2024

HANSEN: OK. Well, for those who can hear us, just-- good morning. Welcome to the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Senator Ben Hansen. I represent the 16th Legislative District in Washington, Burt, Cuming, and parts of Stanton Counties, and I serve as Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. I would like to invite the members of the committee to introduce themselves, starting on my right with Senator Ballard.

BALLARD: Beau Ballard, District 21.

DAY: Senator Jen Day, represent Legislative District 49 in Sarpy County.

HANSEN: Also assisting the committee is our legal counsel, Benson Wallace, and our committee clerk, Christina Campbell. So today we have 4 gubernatorial hearing candidates. These candidates have been approved by the Governor to positions around the state. Some are calling in by phone, but we do have one here in person today, as well. And we will actually start with the in-person appointment. And that would be Brent Heyen. And this is for the Commission of the Blind and Visually Impaired. Would like to come up and kind of share a little bit about yourself and the position, and see if you can answer any questions the committee might have.

BRENT HEYEN: Thank you.

HANSEN: Welcome.

BRENT HEYEN: So a little about, about myself, I guess. I grew up in eastern Nebraska. I currently work as a front office manager at one of the Fairfield's here in town, I serve-- this will be my second term on the Board of Commissioners for the Commission for the Blind, of which for the last couple of years I've been serving as the chairman. And I'm, you know, just have enjoyed serving and hope to continue to serve. So.

HANSEN: All right. Good. You said this is your second one? You're--

BRENT HEYEN: It will be, yes.

HANSEN: OK. All right. So in kind of a nutshell, how was your first term? What did you think?

BRENT HEYEN: Well, with the pandemic and everything, it was rather interesting.

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HANSEN: Yeah. I bet.

BRENT HEYEN: It was, kind of, I guess you might say a bit of a blind sider, considering--

_____: [INAUDIBLE]

BRENT HEYEN: --considering it-- you know, also [INAUDIBLE]--

_____: Can you hear me?

BRENT HEYEN: --only like 3 months into my, my term. So-- but the, you know, commission handled it very well as, as well as anyone could, I guess. And it's been an experience, a good experience. I've learned a lot in-- at the-- during the time, as well as, like I said, I've had the honor of serving as first, the executive secretary, and then the chairman for the last couple years, so.

HANSEN: So hopefully your second term isn't as tumultuous as maybe the first.

BRENT HEYEN: Crossing my fingers.

HANSEN: All right. Cool. Let's see if-- do we have any questions from the committee? Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairman Hansen. And thank you, Brent, for being here today. And thank you for your service to Nebraska. Just interested to know, how did you originally find out about the commission, and what interested you in being a part of it?

BRENT HEYEN: Well, I was actually around-- I first started receiving the services back when it was services for the visually impaired, part of-- underneath the umbrella of DHHS. And while I wasn't actively involved in the formation of the commission, I, I knew of it. I knew a lot of the people who were, were, you know, being active in it. I did actually testify in front of this committee once, when the discussion of possibly putting it back under DHHS, rather than being its own commission came about. So I've known of the commission through, you know, pretty much its inception. And really, I guess what got me wanting to be part of it, I honestly never really saw myself as, you know, having the, the proper expertise, even though I had received services myself. But it was actually the director, Carlos Servan, who called me up and said, hey, Brent, they've got an opening, and I think you'd be good for it. You might want to think about it. And so, you know, I took some time to think about it and decided to apply. And I

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figured if I got it in, I got in. If I didn't, you know, so be it. It wasn't meant for me to be. So-- and I, of course, got in, so.

DAY: Wonderful. Thank you.

HANSEN: Good. Senator Ballard.

BALLARD: Thank you, Chair. Thanks for being here. What, what initiatives are you working on on the commission? Anything that's on the horizon that we should be aware of?

BRENT HEYEN: Yeah. Actually, first of all, in, I believe, October, we have the 50th anniversary of our orientation center. I do believe-- and some invitations have gone out for the Governor and-- as well as any senators that might want to attend. We also have a partnership with a company called 3D Printing Inc. [PHONETIC] that is creating-- taking photos, paint-- famous paintings and whatnot, and making them 3D so that blind people can feel them. And so we're partnering with them, and-- as well as a lot of museums in Nebraska. Like, for example, the Joslyn, when it opens, they're going to have-- so we're-- big grand opening thing for this display that they're going to have, where they will have a number of various pictures and, and stuff like that, that they've printed in 3D. They've got these sensors on them, so when you're feeling them, it'll like-- they have these people that they paid as voice actors to read off things about whatever-- ever it is you're feeling. And so, that's something we're really excited about. That'll be coming up here in a few months, as well. And, you know, I'm also just, you know, doing what we can to serve the blind of Nebraska every day.

BALLARD: Thank you.

HANSEN: All right. Thank you. So, appreciate you being here in person, too. That's nice of you. I know some people, it's difficult to make it here, but it's always nice to see people and talk, talk to them directly. So, what we'll probably end up doing here is Execing shortly or whenever we can here, and then hopefully get this on the floor for a vote. And get everything, everything moved on as we can-- as soon as we can. So, again, thank you for coming here in person.

BRENT HEYEN: My pleasure.

HANSEN: All right. Thank you. So that will conclude the hearing for Brent Heyen. And then we'll move on to Patty. OK. All right. We'll like-- we'll take a short break here so we can get the other two on the line here, in one second.

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[BREAK]

SHAILA COFFEY: I've been in, in EMS for about 15 years now, EMT, started out that way. Been a paramedic for over 10 years, and then actually went on to get my medical degree. And I'm an EMS physician now. So as a paramedic, I worked for the Glenwood Volunteer in [INAUDIBLE], where I live. And then I'm-- as an EMS physician, have 6 services that I'm medical director of, plus a flight service. My specialties are rural EMS, as well as POCUS, or point of care ultrasound within EMS. I have 3 services that are currently [INAUDIBLE] with it. And that-- well now, [INAUDIBLE] my side job-- or my real job is being an ER physician at University of Nebraska, at the main campus, and been doing that for about 5 years now.

HANSEN: OK. Yeah. I'm just looking through some of the resume that you provided and some of that, your, you know, some of the history that, of research that you've done before and also some of the presentations that you've done, so quite the lengthy resume. So it's very appreciative to have somebody with such an extensive background and knowledge to be on the, on the board. And out of curiosity, because I couldn't remember if I, if I didn't see it on here. Is this your, your first term that you'd be running for? Shaila, are you there? Shaila, are you there?

SHAILA COFFEY: Yep.

HANSEN: OK. So we'll, we'll see if there's any questions from the committee. OK?

SHAILA COFFEY: OK.

HANSEN: OK. Senator Day.

DAY: Thank you, Chairman Hansen. And thank you, Shaila, for your willingness to serve Nebraska. So I'm going to repeat the question I think Senator Hansen just asked. We didn't hear your response. Is this your first term that you're running for, for the board?

SHAILA COFFEY: Yeah, yep. This is my first term running for the board.

DAY: OK. And how did you hear about the opening?

SHAILA COFFEY: So, since I moved back to the area, I've been interested in being on the state board. I go to all the meetings, and really think what they're doing is great and kind of headed in the right direction. And so I really-- I've been most proactively looked

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to see if there were any board spots, and kind of been following it that way, and heard there was an opening for the paramedic position. And so that's when I decided to pursue it. So I'm a pro-- proactively-- been hearing it from anybody.

DAY: Excellent. That's great. Thank you.

HANSEN: Senator Ballard.

BALLARD: Thank you, Chairman Hansen. Thank you, Shaila, for being here. Did you say you worked closely with rural EMS? Did you say that?

SHAILA COFFEY: Yep. With rural EMS. I have a variety of different services that I directly work with. One of them is Ithaca, Nebraska, which is a non-transport BLS service. I have Valley, which is about a town, maybe 5,000, in that range there. And I had a couple more that are kind of more small, mostly in eastern Nebraska standpoint. But then I do a lot of lectures and conferences out-- Kearney, Broken Bow, just to reach that real rural side of EMS.

BALLARD: Yeah. Thank you. I'm gonna ask you an opinion question. In your opinion, what can the Legislature do to better support rural fire and EMS services? I know it's kind of a loaded question.

SHAILA COFFEY: I think that's a-- yeah. I think it's a great question. I, I wish there was a perfect answer to it. Give us millions and millions of dollars, I guess. But no, I think one big thing and this is kind of one thing I thought is, is, you know, when we [INAUDIBLE] the Legislature thing. But if we could influence [INAUDIBLE] in high school, and really get people interested in EMS early. And have supported classes in getting your EMT while you're in high school. And then the people that stay in that community can actually become the new chief for their own community. It's kind of a vision dream that I have. But again, that takes time and money and implementation. But I think [INAUDIBLE] kind of a slow, steady process that every state that has rural EMS is dealing with right now.

BALLARD: OK. Thank you.

HANSEN: OK. All right. Shaila, so like I mentioned before, we'll end up doing here is voting on this appointment as a committee. And from there, it'll move on to the floor if it gets voted out of committee. And then we'll end up voting on it as a legislative body. And then it'll move on from there for official appointment. So I appreciate you calling in, taking time out of your day to kind of fill us in on, on,

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on yourself and the, and the position. And thank you very much for your service and willing to run.

SHAILA COFFEY: Thank you.

HANSEN: All right. Well, that will conclude all the gubernatorial appointments for today. And we will-- I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

DAY: So moved.

BALLARD: Second.

HANSEN: There's been a motion and a second to adjourn.

SHAILA COFFEY: Goodbye.

HANSEN: Thanks.

DAY: Goodbye. So we can't just-- we have to have a--