

HOLDCROFT: OK, welcome to the General Affairs Committee. I am Senator Rick Holdcroft representing Legislative District 36, and I serve as chair of the committee. The committee will take up the nomination in the order posted. This public hearing today is your opportunity to be part of the legislative process and to express your position on the, on the proposed nominee. If you are planning to testify today, please fill out one of the green testifier sheets that are on the table at the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill it out completely. Please move to the front row to be ready to testify. When it is your turn to come forward, give the testifier sheet to the page. We don't have a page today. If you do not wish to testify, but would like to indicate your position on the individual of this, there are also yellow sign-in sheets back on the table for each nominee. These sheets will be included as an exhibit to the official hearing record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name, and spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. We will begin each bill hear-- each nominee hearing with the, the nominee's opening statement, followed by proponents of the nominee, then opponents, and finally anyone speaking in the neutral capacity. We will finish with a closing statement by the nominee, if he wishes to do so. We will be using a three-minute light system for all testifiers. When you begin your testimony, the light on the table will be green. When the light-- when the yellow light comes on, you have one minute remaining, and the red light indicates your time is finished. Questions for the committee may follow, which do not count against your time. Also, committee members may come and go during the hearing. This has nothing to do with the importance of the nominee being heard; it is just part of the process, as senators may have bills to introduce in other committees, which is unlikely today. A few final items to facilitate today's hearing. If you have any handouts or copies of your testimony, please bring up at least 12 copies and give them to the clerk. Please note that thumb drives, CDs, DVDs, oversized documents, books, lists of signatures and similar items will not be accepted as exhibits for the record. Props, charts, or other visual aids cannot be used simply because they cannot be transcribed. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Verbal outbursts or applause are not permitted in the hearing room; such behavior may be cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. Finally, committee procedures for all committees state that written position comments on a bill to be included in the record must be submitted by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. The only acceptable method of submission is via the Legislature's website at

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nebraskalegislature.gov. Written position letters will be included in the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included in the committee statement. You may submit a position comment for the record or testify in person, not both. I will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting on my left.

DeKAY: Barry DeKay, representing District 40, which consists of Holt, Knox, Cedar, Antelope, northern part of Pierce, northern part of Dixon County.

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

QUICK: Dan Quick, District 35: Grand Island.

ROUNTREE: Victor Roundtree, District 3: west Bellevue, east Papillion, and the lands between.

STORM: Good afternoon. Jared Storm, District 23, which would be Butler, Saunders, Colfax County.

HOLDCROFT: Senator John Cavanaugh also acts as the vice chair of our committee. Also assisting the committee today, to my right is our legal counsel, Kevin Langevin, and to my far left is our committee clerk, Barb Dorn. No pages today, and we have just the one nominee. So, Mr. Gomez, please come forward. Yep, only one. Welcome to the General Affairs Committee. You have as much time as you wanted for an introduction.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Well, thank you very much. Thank you, chairman and audience. It's my privilege to be here. I almost missed the meeting-- the hearing today, because we had a kind of pretty good accident on Interstate 29, took us about an hour to get out of there, so we're lucky to be in time, you know, so. But God make us to be here. So, my name is Antonio Gomez. I born in Mexico. But I--

HOLDCROFT: Would you, would you mind spelling your first and last name for the record?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Antonio, A-n-t-o-n-i-o, last name is G-o-m-e-z. Again, like I say, I was born in Mexico, but I come to this great United States of America back in 1965, so I've been 61 years in this great country, and 56 years in the Siouland area.

Most of my life, I live in South Sioux City and Jackson, Nebraska. And during my time as a public servant, you know, I belong to a lot of-- quite a few boards, you know, college boards. And I was an elected official in 2007, and I took the oath in January 8, 2008, and I was reelected in 2012 and reelected in 2016 Dakota County Commissioner, Board of Commissioner. Served 12 years. Prior to that, I served on the Mexican-American Commission of the state of Nebraska, which is probably Latino Commission now. Is that what it is? I don't-- I think they changed the name. I don't know. Back in the day, I was appointed by Governor, Governor Thone. And through those years, I met a lot of good people, great people. The Siouxland Chamber of Commerce in Sioux City, they have a delegation that went to Washington, D.C.-- just stop me if I go too, too, too, too long-- and that delegation started in 1975, and there's about 60 of us: business, elected officials, and a person that wishing to go, but there's a certain number. So, I went from 2011 to 2016. In those years that I went to this three-state delegation, the purpose of it is, you bring your concerns in your area, you know, to the congressmen and senators. So, I meet all the centers from the Tri-State area, starting from Bob Kerry up to Mike Johanns and the present people, Deb Fischer, and I didn't-- Pete Ricketts, you know, I didn't have the chance to meet with him, with the Senator, but I-- Mike Johanns, and all those people. So, I serve with all my heart and all my whole energy, you know, and this is part of my public service. I started my own business in 1981. So, we own Gomez Pallet Company in Jackson, Nebraska, so we've been in business for 43 years, 44 years, and we provide product for meatpacking industry and other businesses around the area. We travel as far as Omaha, Sioux Falls and Norfolk. We cannot go farther than that because the local competition, you know, they can have a better prices than ours because they're afraid to scale you in those [INAUDIBLE]. So, this, this-- that's part of my life, and I'm here, I have the great honor from Governor Pillen that he wants me to serve in this Racing and Gaming Commission. And like I, I told Mrs. Ricketts that any, any time that I start a new board, you know, so you always learn things, and I am so-- I'm going to take a couple of meetings to learn all about the Racing and Gaming Commission. So, I'm here, willing to serve my great country, and-- I say my great country because I am a United States citizen now. So anyway. And my state and the people in my county and my-- in my city.

HOLCrOFT: OK, let's see if there are any questions from the committee. Any questions for the nominee? Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: Thank you. Your business is right out there, [INAUDIBLE] on Highway 20 where you have the-- your house and the corrals and stuff there?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: That's, that's correct. They're right across from the landfill, yes. Yeah.

DeKAY: Yeah. So, I drive by that several times a year, and I was always curious about that. Second, what, what was your driver for wanting to be on the Gaming board was? Something you thought about or a task to do, or--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Well, like a--

DeKAY: --or do you have an interest in the gaming-- Racing and Gaming law?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Like I said, the only thing I know about gaming-- I have not really-- I don't believe that for me personally, go on the casino and throw money on those slot machines, because I think-- I, I haven't had any luck, so I'm not-- but I love horses. I even hold horses in my place out there, you know. I used to have 24 quarter horses and ponies for my kids and then my grandkids. But first, answering your question. I give up public service in 2020 right, right after the pandemic, you know, and I said, this is enough, I'll retire. But I think I missing having meetings here and there, you know. When I heard that this, this board meets six times of the year, very occasionally there's an extra meeting. But I kind of like it, you know? It's not that many meetings. And also, I think every time you join a commission or board or anything, you met good people and you learn something. So, I'm here to serve, like I said. But far as having knowledge about the horses, no. I went to the horse races a lot, but that's it. I love horses.

DeKAY: Thank you.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: You bet.

HOLDCROFT: Senator Cavanaugh.

J. CAVANAUGH: Thank you, chairman. Thanks for being here, Mr. Gomez--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Thank you.

J. CAVANAUGH: --and your willingness to continue to serve. I just had one question. There's a-- on the application, there's the parts that certify that I nor any member of my family-- immediate family, and you said no, I can't certify, can not certify. Do you know--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Say that?

J. CAVANAUGH: So, it's one of the questions on the application. Actually, I think I pulled it up on my phone. So, it's-- the question is certify that I nor any member of my immediate family, nor any other party having influence over me, has a material, personal, or financial interest with any matter under the discretion or jurisdiction of the board or commission to which I applied. I further certify that no other relationship, bias, or ethical conflict exists which prevents me from fulfilling my duties as appointed, and you said can't-- you couldn't certify that?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Well, the think that I-- they understand the question myself. It is that if I have personal interests or willing to gambling and make money out of that, no, that's not my purpose. I mean, I'm sorry if I not well understand the question, but that my-- that's my purpose, and my purpose is to do my job as well, as well as I-- as good as I can, and trying to stay away from any problems, you know? I mean, that's, that's probably why I say that. But--

J. CAVANAUGH: So, you don't have, like, a family member who works at a casino?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: No.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: No, no.

J. CAVANAUGH: Or in any of these businesses that you would have jurisdiction over?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: No. No, sir. No, sir.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK. And so, your thought was that you just don't like gambling?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Right, right, right.

J. CAVANAUGH: OK.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Sorry about that.

J. CAVANAUGH: Oh, no. That's a, that's a, that's a preferable answer.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: I still learning, you see? At my age, I still learning. Thank you very much for clarify that.

J. CAVANAUGH: All right. Thanks.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee? Now, are you a quarter horse-- would you consider yourself a quarter-horse breeder? Or--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: No, I just love these horses, you know? And late in the day, in the days, I kind of get rid of most of my quarter horses, and I end up with Saddlebred and Frisians, you know, because I like the dancing horses, and I participate in every parade in town and the county and everywhere, because my horses do a very good show. So, it's just, it's-- just a very fanatic guy of the horses. I love those animals.

HOLDCROFT: And have you had anything to do with the horse track up there in South Sioux City?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Other than put a dollar here and there, that's [INAUDIBLE] other than that, but-- and seeing, petting the horse, and seeing the races, but. I know that it's probably the end of put a dollar and that on gambling, so I, I don't have problems with that.

HOLDCROFT: Yes, Senator DeKay.

DeKAY: One more question. I've driven by before. Do you have any competitions out at the-- along the highway there? Because I've driven by and I've, you know, I've seen people dressed in Mexican regalia for-- I don't know if it was a horse competition or rodeo, or--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Right in my place, if it is a holiday or something like that, we gather as family and friends, you know,

and, and I invite them with horses, you know. And we have Mexican coleadero or charreada, that's what we call them, you know, and do some tricks with the horses and steers and, and so forth. Like the-- not, not any difference than, than here in the United States. But I also through [INAUDIBLE] in South Sioux City for 12 years, right in Old Crystal Lake [SIC] Park, you know, right along Highway 20 and right across from the-- our field, it used to be, not anymore there. So, I, I really enjoy those events, and that was for the public, you know? I bring some grey vans, and there was a family type of occasion, you know? Because I can see mom and dad with three or four kids, you know? And they just pay the admission and they turn them loose, the kids. And quite often, we have kids come over to us [INAUDIBLE] I can't find my dad, I can't find my mom, [INAUDIBLE]. Pretty sure the parents, you know, when they go in there, they-- that's like a day off for them, and they turn them loose. Because I have carousels, I have ponies, and I have swings and everything else, so. Yeah, yeah. I do, I do some-- I like to do those events in my home-- in my--

DeKAY: That's probably what I witnessed when I've driven by a few times.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: So, you come by and you see us riding the horse and do something, right?

DeKAY: What's that?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: You come by there, and you saw us doing--

DeKAY: Yeah.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Yeah, that's, that's those holiday weekends, like 4th of July, Memorial Day weekend, Labor Day, things like that. But I don't know for how long, you know, because Tony's getting up in age. But I still love my horse, and I still ride him.

DeKAY: Thank you.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: You bet.

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions? Yes, Senator Rountree.

ROUNTREE: Thank you so much, Chairman Holdcroft, and thank you so much, Mr. Gomez, for being here. I appreciate--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Thank you.

ROUNTREE: --your testimony. And like you, I don't like to gamble too, too hard-earned money to just let it slide like that for me, personally. But that being said, I know you love the racing side and the horse side. But this is the Racing and the Gaming Commission. How do you plan to-- I know your passion is going to be there for the racing side. How will your passion also be for enacting the things that we need on the gaming side, even though you personally don't care for the gaming?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Well, like I said, you know, I'm, I'm not a gambler. Thanks to God that I don't have the habit. So, I can-- it doesn't bother me at all, you know, if [INAUDIBLE] give a dollar on the horse track, you know, realistically. I like-- the, the main purpose that to go there, you know, is going to see this horse race and stuff like that, you know? So, I think my main purpose is to serve on the board. It's like I said, you know, I like horses. And I think-- I'm going to tell you something. I always bother Pete Ricketts about why don't-- we don't have a casino in Nebraska, because I can see most of the people from the area going across the river, and I can see Sioux City doing the great things from the money they generate at the casino, you know? And good things. And he, he never was in favor of it, which is-- I understand. I-- you know, it's very-- so unless [INAUDIBLE] came and put it in the ballot-- I think, personally myself, if we monitor those dollars what they distributed in the way they should be, you know, I don't see nothing wrong with that, and I, I, I do everything that I can to do the right thing and try and stay away from trouble, from problems.

ROUNTREE: All right, thank you so much. I appreciate that.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Thank you, Senator. Thank you

HOLDCROFT: Any other questions from the committee? Is there anyone here who's going to testify? No? Just here in support? OK. Would you like to make a closing statement?

ANTONIO GOMEZ: No, thank you very much for the opportunity to-- I hope you let me serve on the commission. Other than that, I will do my best, you know? Lord, give me health in my early, my early years, not my older years. Thank you. Thank you, sir.

HOLDCROFT: Well, thanks for coming all this way. Appreciate it. It's always better to do the interviews in person than it is over the phone. So--

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Well, it is. Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I prefer that we don't-- thank you very much.

HOLDCROFT: Sure.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: God bless you all.

HOLDCROFT: That concludes the hearing-- oh, wait a minute. We do have-- we had no online or ADA comments. I had to make that statement. And, and that concludes our hearing for Mr. Gomez. Thank you very much.

ANTONIO GOMEZ: Thank you very much.