

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BALLARD: First, I'd like to introduce the members of the committee. I'm Senator Beau Ballard. I represent District 21, and vice chair of the Transportation and Telecom Committee. We'll start on my right with Senator Fredrickson.

FREDRICKSON: Good afternoon. John Fredrickson. I represent District 20, which is in central-west Omaha.

BRANDT: Tom Brandt, District 32: Fillmore, Thayer, Jefferson, Saline, and southwestern Lancaster Counties.

BOSN: Carolyn Bosn, District 25, which is southeast Lincoln, Lancaster County, including Bennet.

BALLARD: Our committee clerk today is Connie Thomas and the legal counsel is Gus Shoemaker. Our pages today will be Wesley and Alberto. On the table near the entrance to the room, you'll find a green testifier sheet. If you're planning to testify today, please complete that sheet and hand it to the page. And when you come up, you will help-- you'll help us keep an accurate record of the hearing. For those who do not wish to testify but would like a record of your presence at the hearing, please sign the yellow sheet in the book on the table near the entrance. Also, I'd like to note that Legislature's policy that all letters for the record must be received by the committee by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. Any handouts submitted by testifiers will also be included as part of the record as exhibits. We would ask if you had any handouts that you please provide 12 copies and give them to the page. If you need additional copies, the page will be able to-- help to provide them for you. Understand that senators may come and go during the hearing. This is common, as they're required to present bills in other committees during this time. Testimony for each bill will begin with the introducer's opening statement. After the opening statement, we'll hear from any supporters of the bill, then from those in opposition, and then from those speaking in neutral capacity. The introducer of the bill will then be given an opportunity to make closing statements if they wish to do so. We ask that you begin with your testimony by giving us your first and last name, and please spell it for the record. We will be using the three-minute light system today. Two-minute light system, three-minute light system. When you begin your testimony, then the light on the table will turn green. The yellow light-- in your-- one-minute warn-- warning. And the red light comes on, we will wrap up your final thoughts. There will be no demonstration of opposition or support on

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Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

the testimony allowed. We'd like everyone to remind-- everyone to remind that in-- including senators, turn off your cell phones or put them on vibrate. We do have two additional members for-- into the ca-- for the committee, if they'd like to introduce themselves.

GUERECA: Dunixi Guereca, LD 7: downtown in south Omaha.

STORER: Tanya Storer. I represent District 43: 11 counties in north-central Nebraska.

BALLARD: And with that, we will begin our hearing on LB134. Senator Holdcroft, you're welcome to begin.

HOLDCROFT: Good afternoon, Vice Chairman Ballard and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. For the record, my name is Senator Rick Holdcroft, spelled R-i-c-k H-o-l-d-c-r-o-f-t. And I represent Legislative District 36, which includes west and south Sarpy County. I am here today to discuss LB134. This is the third year we have brought this bill, and I am hoping this committee will make the third time a charm. And LB134, among others, cleans up and harmonizes language in state statute regarding license plates for military veterans in our state. It also adds the U-- the United States Space Force to the list of military branches recognized by the Department of Motor Vehicles. And it authorizes the creation of a campaign medal plate for veterans of Operation Inherent Resolve. This bill will create six new license plate designs, printed prototype examples of each-- of which the page-- the pages have handed out. So you'll see the, the six new plates there in front of you. The seventh example retains the existing design for the Purple Heart recipient li-- license plate. So the blue-- the Purple Heart already exists. The first two plates are generic in nature and may be requested by veterans in good standing and who are registered with the Department of Veterans Affairs. There is a plate that indicates that the placeholder is a veteran, and there is also an option to place the international symbol of access, or ISA symbol-- commonly known as the wheelchair symbol-- on this plate. In order to qualify for the ISA symbol, the placeholder must go through the standard process with their physician to qualify for a handicap license plate. The handicap must be certified by the physician as permanent in nature. The handicap does not have to be related to military service. The next two plates clear up any ambiguity regarding license plates for disabled veterans. Currently, the abbreviation DAV appears on these plates with periods in between. DAV is the acronym for a national veterans service organization: Disabled American Veterans. The new license plate spells

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Rough Draft

out disabled veteran to clearly dissociate the plate from this group. There is also the option to add the aforementioned ISA symbol. With advertisement from the Nebraska-- with advisement from the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, LB134 would amend state statute to indicate that any veteran with at least a 10% or higher disability related to military service would qualify for these plates. The old DAV plates will be replaced as registrations are renewed throughout 2026. Lastly, this bill will allow the ISA symbol to be added to qualifying plateholders of the Purple Heart license plate. Existing plateholders not requesting the handicapped symbol could retain the plates that have already been issued to them. There are no fees beyond registration fees and taxes for the disabled veteran of Purple Heart plates. The placeholders-- the plateholders for the generic military plates pay, pay either a \$5 plate fee or, for vanity plates, a \$40 fee. Vice Chair Ballard and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee, thank you for your consideration of LB134. I believe this bill is a significant way that we may honor members of our armed forces. I would appreciate a yes vote to advance this legislation. And I'd be happy to answer any questions. Let me just clarify a little bit about the campaign plate. This one you see in front of you is the campaign of the global war on terrorism, and the symbol represents the medal that is awarded for that campaign. Currently, the state has four approved campaign plates. This would add Inherent Resolve. Inherent Resolve was an operation where-- against the ISIS forces in Syria. So if you participated in that, you would be eligible for this plate. I was approached by a number of constituents who requested that we bring this forward to, to maintain it. The, you know, the DMV folks are happy to do it on a one-time basis, but then they need to have 200 people-- actually, 500 people continue to request it for it to stay in print. So we've actually reduced that in the bill, I think down to 200. But that is that bill. You know, this bill goes back three years. And, and my freshman-- I mean, in my first year in 2023, I brought the bill forward. And it was very simple. It was if you had a disabled veteran plate, just the DAV plate, you could park in handicapped parking. You didn't have to have anything else. You didn't have to have any symbols or anything. And I, I actually got pushback from the veterans, the veterans who said, we don't want to take up handicapped spots, particularly if we don't have a disability that is not, is not related to mobility. You know, it may be a loss of sight or might be hearing or it might be something along those lines. And, and we really don't think we qualify for that. And so then the next phase, the one in 2024, was essentially what you see here, where we worked with DAV and motor vehicles and, and, and, and actually

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Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

included the, the handicapped symbol. But they had to qualify. They had to go to a physician to get it qualified. And then they have to also qualify with the Veterans Administration to get the veterans plate. The Purple Heart, that was just, hey, how about me? The veterans-- or, the Purple Heart folks already had the plate. So this bill just adds the handicapped symbol. So this bill was in this, this committee. I think it had support, but, for whatever reason, the, the, the committee was not inclined to do a lot of bills for plates last session. So hopefully this time we'll be able to get this out. Any questions?

BALLARD: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Are there any questions?
Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Vice Chair Ballard. Thank you, Senator, for bringing this bill. So for the inherent freedom, would they use the same plate it'd just be different words? Or do you have a different--

HOLDCROFT: No, it would actually--

BRANDT: --it's a different--

HOLDCROFT: --be-- there's a--

BRANDT: --symbol?

HOLDCROFT: There's a different symbol. There's a medal for Inherent Resolve, and that would be the medal that would be shown on the plate.

BRANDT: So those four, those four that you mentioned would each be a different design?

HOLDCROFT: Yes.

BRANDT: OK.

HOLDCROFT: Oh, yes. Yeah. And the one-- the other four already exist. Yes. And they have a different design.

BRANDT: So then if, if a veteran-- let's say he's Navy.

HOLDCROFT: Yeah.

BRANDT: He can get a-- he can get a disabled Navy plate, right?

HOLDCROFT: Yes.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: OK.

HOLDCROFT: With the Navy symbol on it.

BRANDT: OK.

HOLDCROFT: When it comes to putting the handicapped symbol on, he has to sacrifice the service logo. So you can't have the service logo and the handicapped. It doesn't fit on the, on the, on the plate.

BRANDT: So then that-- OK. So if they're, if they're using the handicapped symbol-- is this actually the plate design then for the veterans or this is just an example?

HOLDCROFT: Yes. I don't think the honor is, is at an angle. I think it's, you know, it's, it's level, but.

BRANDT: It's square.

HOLDCROFT: Square, yes.

BRANDT: OK. I think you've answered my questions. Thank you.

BALLARD: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Are there other-- Senator DeBoer.

DeBOER: Thank you, Senator Ballard. Thank you, Senator Holdcroft, for bringing this again. I remember-- and this may have-- you may have already cleared this up, so this is just a vague recollection--

HOLDCROFT: Yes. I already covered that up before you got here. Go ahead.

DeBOER: This is a vague recollection that there was a problem with some of the symbols, that we have to have some sort of permissions in order to--

HOLDCROFT: Yes. Yeah, I covered that in my opening, but I'll cover it again.

DeBOER: Wow.

HOLDCROFT: The-- under the current-- actually, under the current plates, disabled veterans have D.A.V. And that symbol is--

DeBOER: I heard you say that.

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Rough Draft

HOLDCROFT: Yes. That symbol is actually copyrighted to an organization: the Disabled Veterans of America.

DeBOER: So that is not actually the question I was asking.

HOLDCROFT: I'm sorry.

DeBOER: I did hear that part. The question I was asking is some of the symbols, like the Navy symbol or something like that. So are those are something that you have to get permission from, I suppose, the Defense Department? Are you--

HOLDCROFT: Actually, the D-- Nebraska DAV.

DeBOER: OK.

HOLDCROFT: Yes.

DeBOER: So I just remembered that was a question Bostelman had last time. And if that's all copacetic, then I'm good.

HOLDCROFT: Yes. Yeah-- yes. And as I mentioned to Senator Brandt, if you opt for the, the service symbol--

DeBOER: Right.

HOLDCROFT: --then there's not enough room on the plate for the handicapped symbol.

DeBOER: Yeah. OK. Thank you.

BALLARD: Copacetic. OK. Any other questions? Senator Bosn.

BOSN: Can you just clarify how-- why-- with the handicapped symbol for two of them, it's in front of the letters and the other one it, it is not. It is behind. Is there a reason for that?

HOLDCROFT: Yeah. The Purple Heart one is set up there with the symbol on the left. So the handicapped-- the rest of them, the symbol-- if the symbol-- it has to do with the size of the plates and the way they, they're done. The Purple Heart ones are already set with the Purple Heart on the left. And so the handicapped symbol has to go on the right. But there's not enough room on the veteran plates because of the number of letters to be able to put both the service symbol on the left and the-- a handicapped symbol then on the right.

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Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BOSN: So-- OK. OK. I see now. That-- so this one without the handicapped symbol is an existing plate. So you're just adding the opportunity--

HOLDCROFT: Yeah. Really, the one in the middle on the bottom, the Purple Heart plate already exists. And we're just adding the option for a handicap symbol.

BOSN: That makes more sense. Thank you.

BALLARD: Thank you, Senator Bosn. Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Senator Holdcroft.

HOLDCROFT: I will be here for close.

BALLARD: All right. We'll wait-- we'll, we'll be anticipating your return.

HOLDCROFT: I think I'll be right back.

BALLARD: Are there any proponents for LB134? Good afternoon.

AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Good afternoon.

BALLARD: Whenever you're ready. Yes.

AMANDA VAZQUEZ: OK. Thank you, Senator Ballard and committee members, for the opportunity to speak today. For the record, my name is Amanda Vazquez, spelled A-m-a-n-d-a V-a-z-q-u-e-z. I am the Government Relations Director for the Paralyzed Veterans of America Great Plains Chapter. And I am here to express our support for LB134. This bill would provide a choice for veterans who use a wheelchair or other mobility device to be able to have a veteran license plate as well without giving up the acc-- accessible license plate they need to access parking in their communities. For many veterans who use a wheelchair, accessible parking is the only way they can access stores, doctors' offices, and other places that they may need or want to go. Finding an accessible parking space is the first obstacle to overcome if they want to simply exit their vehicle and be a part of their communities. Because of this, veterans who must rely on accessible parking often don't have the opportunity to choose a veteran-designated license plate. LB134 opens the door for veterans who rely on accessible parking to get to choose a veteran-designated license plate that includes the internationally accepted wheelchair symbol. This change would provide these veterans with the opportunity

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

to not only keep access to accessible parking, but to proudly display their service to our country on their license plate, like so many other veterans currently get to do. A veteran should not have to choose between a designated plate and an accessible plate. This bill corrects that disparity and provides the choice that many veterans don't currently have. I'm hopeful that this bill will pass, giving veterans better options for license plates that meet their needs and their desire to show their pride for their service. LB134 would also change the designation for a veteran with a disability as rated by the Department of Veterans Affairs from "DAV" to "disabled veteran." This would make a clear distinction between the individual as a veteran and a member of the DAV. It is my hope that this bill passes, providing improved options for Nebraska's veterans who are living with a disability. I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have.

BALLARD: Thank you, Ms. Vaquez-- Vazquez. Any questions? Seeing none. Thank you for being here.

AMANDA VAZQUEZ: Thank you.

BALLARD: Any other proponents? Seeing none. Anyone in opposition? Seeing none. Anyone in the neutral capacity? Seeing none. Senator Holdcroft. While Senator Holdcroft's coming up, we have 3, 3 online proponents, no opponents, and no one in the neutral.

HOLDCROFT: So again, this is my third, third round. And I really think it, it could have come out last year, but the committee just wasn't approving a lot of plates. So again, I, I would appreciate us being able to allow for our veterans to be able to, to get a veterans plate that also supports their handicap and allows them to park in, in handicapped spots. So with that, I'm willing-- I'm happy to answer any further questions.

BALLARD: Thank you, Senator Holdcroft. Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Vice Chair Ballard. Do you have any idea about how many plates we're talking about here in total across all the branches?

HOLDCROFT: I think it's, like, 500. But I confi-- confirm that with you.

BRANDT: No, that's fine.

HOLDCROFT: That's a number that I think [INAUDIBLE] to remember.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: All right. Thank you.

BALLARD: All right. Thank you, Senator Brandt. Any additional questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Senator Holdcroft.

HOLDCROFT: Thank you.

BALLARD: That closes our hearing on LB134. And up next, we have LB279, Senator von Gillern. Welcome.

von GILLERN: Good afternoon. Vice Chair Ballard and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. Good to see you two days in a row. It's good to get out of Banking across the hall for a little while. For the record, my name is Senator Brad von Gillern, B-r-a-d v-o-n G-i-l-l-e-r-n. I'm here today to introduce LB279, a bill relating to requirements to display license plates. Put succinctly, LB279 allows you to only display a rear plate on your vehicle. There are a few different motivations behind LB279 aside from the dirty looks or nonfriendly waves of people in rural areas might give me when they see my alphanumeric plate. The main reason, however, in bringing the bill are economic, environmental, and frankly simply listening to the taxpayer. LB279 will benefit Nebraska taxpayers by removing burdensome and unnecessary costs associated with the requirement to display a front license plate. This is ultimate-- ultimately my primary motivation for bringing the bill. It's increasingly common for cars to come from the manufacturer without brackets or mounts for a front license plate. Owners of these vehicles are left with three options: one, pay the car dealership anywhere between \$50 and \$100 to furnish and install a front plateholder; two, pay a \$50 annual fee for a windshield decal indicating the right to display a single plate; or three, drill holes in the front bumper of your new dream car, hoping you don't set off or damage any of the electronic devices that are embedded in your, in your bumpers now. Some will say here today that no front plate poses concerns from either a safety or law enforcement perspective. However, law enforcement has already said that displaying only a rear plate is not substantially detrimental to the interest of public safety if only you're willing to part with \$50. Does the state believe that drivers who can afford to pay an additional fee are safer drivers? Are they are less likely to commit a crime? Are they less likely to encounter law enforcement? I doubt that's the case. When I brought a similar bill in 2023, we had a proponent testimony from a lieutenant with the Omaha Police Department on behalf of the Omaha Police Officers Association who stated that moving to a single license plate requirement would not detract from the ability of law

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Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

enforcement to solve crimes or negatively impact officer safety, part of his rationale being that nearly all of the time police identify a vehicle by its rear license plate. License plate scanners are already set up to scan rear plates because 26 other states only allow a rear plate-- only require a rear plate. If scanners were not set up that way, law enforcement would have no opportunity to capture or pursue over half of the drivers in the country. Others will say today that the issuance of two plates when only one is required to be installed could lead to fraud. My suggestion would be that the counties issue-- issuing simply ask the owners if they intend to post-- post both plates; and if not, they offer to recycle the second plate right then and there. Yesterday in this hearing, Rhonda Lahm indicated that the state recently encountered an aluminum shortage when the last cycle of plates were fabricated. This could be a way to reduce the aluminum needed, provide for financial return to the counties, and do some good for the environment. The fiscal note says that the \$50 fee will no longer be collected. My bill does not say that. The fiscal note says that only one sticker would be provided and therefore lost revenue would occur. My bill does not say that. The fiscal note says that the extra plate could be fraudulently installed on an unregistered vehicle and people wouldn't register that vehicle, thus costing the state money. But one could also steal a plate or a sticker from another car and use it, and that would also be fraud. So I'm not sure why there's a greater concern over this than there is over general plate theft. At the end of the day, LB279 may be-- may in the long run save the state money, keep redundant aluminum license plates out of our landfills, and remove burdensome fees and requirements from Nebraskans. With that, I respectfully urge the Transportation Committee to advance LB279. And I'm happy to take any questions. Thank you.

BALLARD: Thank you, Senator von Gillern. Are there any questions? Seeing none. You gonna stay for closing?

von GILLERN: Yes, I will.

BALLARD: OK.

von GILLERN: Thank you.

BALLARD: All right. Any proponents? Good afternoon.

LOY TODD: Good afternoon, Senator Ballard, members of the committee. My name is Loy Todd. That's L-o-y T-o-d-d. I'm the President and legal counsel for the Nebraska New Car and Truck Dealers Association. In

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

favor of this legislation. Quite frankly, we've been in favor of one plate every time it comes up by the various sponsors through the years. And it's simply a matter of our customers' severe dissatisfaction with putting that bracket on the front of, of vehicles. People either, either don't want it or some people don't care. But the ones who don't want it really don't want it. And it's, it's, it's kind of sad when you see some, some really valuable sports cars and-- or-- even now, we're hearing trucks that, that they are unhappy about having to drill that front bracket onto the-- on the vehicle. And so whatever the complications may be regarding the transition from two to one, I'm sure that people who are much wiser about those things than us will work that out. I've also been asked to testify in favor of the legislation by the Independent Auto Dealers Association. And so with that, we, we continue to support it, and, and hopefully we can find a way to do what many, many other states have done, and that is to eliminate this, this problem for my dealers with their customers. Thank you.

BALLARD: OK. Are there any questions? Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Thank you, Vice Chair Ballard. Thank you, Mr. Todd, for testifying today. But your customers have a choice today. They can buy one plate and a sticker. Isn't that right?

LOY TODD: I, I belie-- certainly. I-- but I think trucks can't. And I, I-- and I believe that's the interpretation of the law at this point. So-- and, and there was an effort to make that happen a year or two ago. And for some reason, it, it didn't succeed. But, but you're right. There, there is a way-- in fact, there are many ways around it. Through the years, there have been exceptions built in. And at some point, the-- we got enough exceptions that we really don't have a rule anymore. And so--

BRANDT: Do you, do you--

LOY TODD: --we're in favor.

BRANDT: Do you know-- and I guess I could try and read through the bill real quick. And, and maybe Senator von Gillern can answer this when he comes up. Does this just ab-- apply to personal vehicles that all commercial vehicles would still be required to have two plates?

LOY TODD: I don't know that.

BRANDT: OK. All right. Thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BALLARD: Any additional questions? Seeing none. Thank you for being here. All right. Next proponent.

ELIZABETH J. SHANAHAN: Good afternoon, senators.

BRANDT: Welcome. Go ahead.

ELIZABETH J. SHANAHAN: OK. My name is Elizabeth J. Shanahan, E-l-i-z-a-b-e-t-h J.; Shanahan, S-h-a-n-a-h-a-n. I had not thought about testifying today, but I do agree. And I am a proponent for this. I've always wanted just one license plate on the back of my vehicle. So that's my testimony.

BRANDT: Well, let's see if there's any questions. Anybody got a question? Thank you.

ELIZABETH J. SHANAHAN: You're welcome.

BRANDT: All right. Proponents. Any more proponents? Seeing none. Opponents. Welcome.

BETH BAZYN FERRELL: Welcome-- or, thank you. Sorry. Is it Friday yet? Good afternoon, Acting Chair Brandt, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Beth, B-e-t-h; Bazyn, B-a-z-y-n; Ferrell, F-e-r-r-e-l-l. I'm with the Nebraska Association of County Officials. I'm appearing here in opposition to LB279, but I just want to say our opposition is completely technical. We had concerns about what to do with the second plate that's issued. It would be cleaner to start this with a new plate cycle where everyone would be on the same page. But I think the suggestions that Senator von Gillern had about, you know, maybe setting up a recycling opportunity in the counties would probably solve that. So I'd be happy to take questions.

BRANDT: OK. Let's see if we have any questions. Questions? I guess I've got a question. Are you obligated to take two plates when you go in?

BETH BAZYN FERRELL: Well, the way that the statute reads now, it says, when two license plates are issued. I, I suppose you could say it-- they could be issued. And here, I'm giving one back. I, I'm not sure what the right interpretation of that would be.

BRANDT: All right. Thank you. OK. Any other opponents? Opponents. Those testifying in the neutral capacity.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

CRAIG BOLZ: Yeah. Senators. My name is Craig Bolz, C-r-a-i-g B-o-l-z. I'm from Palmyra, Nebraska. I'm a farmer. And you're talking to the most conservative person in the state of Nebraska. OK. I'm here testifying neutral because the bill-- I'm 100% for the one plate. It just doesn't go far enough. Maybe next year you can come back and reintroduce the bill and get it correct. I think-- and I don't know why they still do have it-- but in the state of Oregon, you get a license plate and it goes on the vehicle for the life of the vehicle as long as it's in the state. Senators, these are license plates. I, I think this is so com-- of course, I get a kick out of the 49 senators and the governor. You guys are just great entertainment. When, when, when you can attach a license plate to a vehicle permanently and have it done, that is so much common sense. How can, how can you disagree with it? I think it's comical that the person that introduced the bill ahead of me wants to expand the government and create six more plates. I understand we're honoring the veterans. That's great. When I become president, I will take care of the veterans very first in my line. I'm not going to become president. Back to the license plate deal. If we can do anything, anything to get rid of waste in the state of Nebraska and to cut expense and to cut cost-- and maybe even down the line we could get rid of some of these people in the treasurer's office. If anybody had to deal with the women in the treasurer's office in Otoe County, they would understand why that I want one license plate. I have-- we have 19 vehicles we go get license plates for. And I think it's every six years-- I think-- is when they make us change them all. We got, I don't know, five or six grain trailers, lowboy, six semis, five pickups. It takes two days to change these plates if we have to change the plates. If we only have to put the stickers on, it takes me about a day. When the hired help does it, sometimes they get confused. I got stopped in Saline County about a month ago. State patrolman says, you got a different plate on the front of your pickup than the back of your pickup. I says, you've got to be kidding me. The hired help got the plates confused. Cost me \$124. Well, if we didn't have to have a front plate, I'd have 124 more dollars of money that I could eat \$1.51 hotdogs at Sam's at noon. Well. I'm just saying, would you guys please, please stop wasting our taxpayers' money? The, the, the, the budget shortfall in this state is the greatest thing that's happened for years here because you guys got to figure out how to cut 400 and whatever it is-- I think it's million dollars worth of waste in this state. And you will. You'll figure out how to cut it. Please, please advance this bill. Let's get it passed. I wish that I would have known more about your bills that you're introducing later on. I'm sure I probably would be for them too.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: All right. Let's--

CRAIG BOLZ: But please--

BRANDT: Let's see if we have any questions. Your red light is on.

CRAIG BOLZ: Yep. Sure.

BRANDT: Questions? Wow. Everybody's pretty conservative today. I appreciate your, your testimony because I farm also.

CRAIG BOLZ: I know. I know who you are. I know.

BRANDT: I understand when you put the plates and then you've got the registration and then you've got the insurance card and you've got the stickers and-- yeah. You pretty much-- you got to do that yourself. You can't trust somebody else to do that, so. But thank you for your testimony today.

CRAIG BOLZ: Thank you. I loved your article in the paper.

BRANDT: Thank you. OK. Any more neutral testimony? Neutral? Senator. Do we know what we had for--

BOSN: Yes.

BRANDT: --letters? Go ahead and read that in, Senator Bosn.

BOSN: You have 1 proponent, 3 opponents, and 1 neutral.

BRANDT: Thank you.

von GILLERN: Thank you. I, I love it when we think we're different and we're more alike than we think we are. When, when I was running the construction company, we had 42 vehicles to license: trucks, trailers, all kinds of different, different vehicles. And same way we had to, to-- the-- our poor comptroller would take the checkbook and the piles of paper and insurance stuff to the DMV. And, and it was, it was a rough day. I usually ended up having to buy him lunch the next, the next day to-- as a thank-you for that. But-- anyway. So we, we all are familiar with, with some of the challenges of that. Just a couple of, of facts as I, as I wrap up here. When I first brought this bill in 2023, there were 19 states that allowed a single plate displayed. Today, there's 26. Obviously, this is a trend that is, is sweeping the country. The \$50 fee-- and again, I-- there's nothing I can do about

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

the fiscal note that-- but-- other than argue it here. I don't know why the \$50 fee was ever in place. I don't know what purpose it served then. I don't know what purpose it serves now. To go in and say, for \$50, you can-- we'll just waive this requirement and all of the sudden there's no safety issues, there's no security issues, there's no-- you know. The, the-- there were folks that told me that license plate readers wouldn't work if it was only on the back. Well, for \$50, apparently they work. So I don't, I don't know where that came from. It's obviously been a source of revenue from the sta-- for the state and for the Highway Trust Fund. And I was here yesterday telling you how I want to make sure that the trust fund is, is healthy. So I don't want to work against that. But this is just not the right way to do it. It-- the question about passenger vehicles, it is, it is my intention to apply this to passenger vehicles. The bill does not say that. I would, I would-- that's a, that's a really good clarification that I'd be happy to bring. Further clarification, it is a six-year plate cycle. That plate cycle comes up in '29. Obviously, I'm posturing to where in '29 we do-- and I've worked with, with Rhonda Lahm in, in conversation about this. To do-- to make a full change to a single plate system midway through that cycle is burdensome and is-- does not represent a cost savings, believe it or not, because they've already purchased all of the aluminum and all the decals and everything else. So it really-- so it makes sense to do that in '29, and this would be a way to tee that up. And then lastly, the other comment about six years, is my understanding, is that the reflective coating on the-- had a good conversation with Senator DeBoer earlier this morning. The reflective coating on the plates is, is warranted for six years. So after that, if we had a more permanent plate, it would be-- it represents some-- likely to deteriorate and become difficult to read. So. Yeah. Be happy to take any questions.

BRANDT: OK. Let's see what we've got. Senator Bosn.

BOSN: Thank you. Happy to have further follow-up conversations with you. But I kind of come at this from the law enforcement perspective, from a safety-- and it's unfortunate none of them were here today. Do you have any idea what the percentage of cases they solve are based off of license plate reading?

von GILLERN: I don't know. I don't have any hard numbers on that. All I have is the conversations that I had with the OPOA.

BOSN: And from my understanding of the sticker on the front and why there's a fee is because they have a new program they have to run to

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

maintain that new system. Whereas if they just read the license plate, that's already covered with rear license plate readers, but to use a sticker on the front. Are you familiar that--

von GILLERN: Yeah, I've had the sticker on the front. And it is not readable from anywhere unless you're standing next to it.

BOSN: No, but it-- they, they verify it through that sticker. So they take the information off of that, enter it into a database that they have to pay to maintain. Is that somewhat in line, at least with your experiences?

von GILLERN: The sticker that, that I had didn't-- it didn't have a QR code or a barcode or anything on it. So it, it simply just gave authorization, so. And I would think that that would all be in when they run your plate anyway.

BOSN: So it doesn't have a number on it at all?

von GILLERN: Going off memory. I'm sorry. I don't remember.

BOSN: That's OK. OK.

von GILLERN: Yeah. It may have. I, I don't recall.

BOSN: OK.

von GILLERN: Yeah.

BOSN: Yeah. I mean-- and then I guess my final question is, you know, you have stated, well, law enforcement does say it's safe because if you pay \$50-- well, I-- did law enforcement support that or did they oppose it and it passed anyway?

von GILLERN: I have no idea.

BOSN: OK. All right.

von GILLERN: I have no idea. But we've not heard any stories-- I've not heard any stories about disastrous outcomes from, from individuals that only had a plate on the rear of their car. In fact, there was a-- couple years ago, there was a fugitive trans-- you know, crossing the state that was tagged. And I don't know if that was from a front or rear plate, but-- again, it-- they-- it's got-- if, if that, if that-- I won't read all the 26 states, but if that car was registered in any

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

of those 20-- in fact, I think it was registered in Washington, which was a--

BOSN: I think it was Texas.

von GILLERN: Was it Texas? Which also is a one state-- or, one plate state.

BOSN: Do you know how many of our surrounding states are one plate states?

von GILLERN: You're going to make me read them, aren't you? Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. So just a couple.

BOSN: Thank you.

von GILLERN: You're welcome. Thank you.

BRANDT: OK. Senator Fredrickson.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you, Senator Brandt. Thank you, Senator von Gillern. This is my second favorite license plate bill behind, of course, my own that I'll be bringing later. So I-- based on just sort of your testimony and, and sort of what we heard as well, it seems to me that-- and I just want to confirm this-- it seems that you'd be amenable if the committee were to see fit to amend the bill to line up with the cyc-- the six-year cycle in the way that makes the most sense for the DMV from a cost perspective. Does that seem fair?

von GILLERN: Yeah. I'd rather get it done now. And, and-- at the end of the six-year cycle in 2029, I-- if, if, if this bill doesn't advance, I'll bring a bill next year that says, in 2029, at the end of the plate cycle, we just completely do away with the second plate. And then we save half of the cost. We save half of the hassle. You know, if, if the fees are an issue, then the fees will, you know, as far as what goes to the Highway Trust Fund, then DMV will have to propose to increase the fees accordingly to make sure-- to, to say that even, you know, you're only, you're only, you're only getting one plate, the cost doesn't go down. But ob-- but-- or-- to the, to the licensee. But the state-- but the state would save money by only fabricating half the plates.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

FREDRICKSON: Right. Right. Right. And, and I, and I, and I think about this too also kind of on the safety perspective. You know, I, I, I have a single plate. I paid the \$50. The, the sticker does have a number, so.

von GILLERN: OK. Thank you.

FREDRICKSON: But-- yeah. I mean, I think it's one of those things that perhaps if our technology is not up to the single plate, then might-- we might be needing to upgrade that--

von GILLERN: Right.

FREDRICKSON: --as well, so.

von GILLERN: Thank you.

FREDRICKSON: Yep. Thank you.

von GILLERN: Yeah.

BRANDT: Other questions? I guess I've got just a few.

von GILLERN: Sure.

BRANDT: First of all, in '29, it appears that the DMV will start printing plates. So unlike today, where you go into the treasurer's office and there's two plates for every number, if you do want a single plate, there will be no waste. OK? We found that out yesterday. We did-- or, at least-- I think most of the people on the committee received a letter from sheriff in Douglas County opposing this. And his rationale was this: you're in pursuit. The individuals back into a spot in a parking lot and the officers in the cruiser are going down the line and they have no identification on that car. That was the main reason that he had on that. And I don't know if you have a, a comment on that or--

von GILLERN: If, if they were close enough to read the plate in pursuit at some point, then-- from-- they were-- if they were pursuing, they were pursuing from behind, and they would have gotten a good ID on the vehicle. I'm not going to-- I, I know Sheriff Hanson. I trust his judgment. If he says it's a challenge, then, then possibly it's a challenge. But it-- that seems pretty overcomable.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: I, I, I would assume that there's probably multiple cruisers. They identified-- he went into the Westroads parking lot and you have ten cruisers going up and down the lines looking.

von GILLERN: If it was a red, you know, Chevy Impala, I'm pretty sure they're looking for a red Chevy Impala regardless of what plate it's on--

BRANDT: OK.

von GILLERN: --on it.

BRANDT: Nothing else. We did the letters on this one? OK.

von GILLERN: Great.

BRANDT: Thank you.

von GILLERN: All right. Thank you.

BRANDT: Senator DeBoer is, is up. This is like musical chairs.

DeBOER: Literally musical chairs. We should sing. Senator Brandt, we now are ready for your bill.

BOSN: LB343 is what's listed first.

DeBOER: Yeah. We have LB343.

BRANDT: OK. And we've got handouts.

DeBOER: Welcome, Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: Good afternoon, Chairwoman DeBoer and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is Tom Brandt, T-o-m B-r-a-n-d-t. I represent District 32: Fillmore, Thayer, Jefferson, Saline, and southwestern Lancaster Counties. I am here today to introduce LB343. LB343 would reduce the costs of an organizational license plate from \$70 to \$40, aligning it with the cost of a specialty license plate. When the Legislature authorizes a new specialty plate, such as the Czech Heritage plate last year-- which is now available for purchase-- the cost is \$5 for a general alphanumeric plate or \$40 for a personalized plate. However, if an organization applies for its own specialty plate, like the Nebraska Corn Growers, the cost is \$70 for both alphanumeric and personalized versions. It is unclear why this discrepancy exists, but it seems

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

inconsistent and unnecessary. This change will result in a revenue loss, as noted in the fiscal note, but my hope is that it will be partially offset by increased sales of these plates. Additionally, I encourage this committee and the Legislature to consider raising the current \$5 minimum price for specialty plates to better reflect their value. But that is a conversation for another day. It is important to note that organizational plates do not generate additional revenue for the sponsoring organization. All proceeds go to the DMV Cash Fund and the Highway Trust Fund. In contrast, a portion of the revenue from some specialty plates supports a foundation or account associated with the sponsoring organization. Otherwise, the funds go to the DMV Cash Fund. The goal of LB343 is simple: making the cost of these plates consistent and fair for all organizations. And I believe this small change will encourage more participation while ensuring greater equity in the system. With that, I'd be happy to answer any questions.

DeBOER: Are there any questions? Senator Storer.

STORER: Thank you, Senator DeBoer. I'm not sure what to call you at this point, chair, vice chair, or-- thank you, Senator Brandt. I guess-- and, and maybe you've sort of answered this question, but any idea why these were different rates to begin with?

BRANDT: Yeah. What's been presented to me is that originally if you're organization out-- let's take the Cattlemen, for existence, wanted a-- for instance, wanted a plate. They had to apply to the DMV. And the DMV would tell them you had to generate 250 plates and they would approve your design and it was going to cost you \$70. So all of these organizations on top got approved through the DMV outside of the Legislature. And then the specialty plates all came through the Legislature. And it's-- and this is just me. I think when Senator Chambers got the Mountain Lion plate, he kind of started this here. And so these plates underneath all went through the Legislature. And you can tell there's-- these abbreviations after those are going to-- the excess funds are going to those organizations, some of that. What you need to understand is, from the testimony yesterday-- and I confirmed this with my county treasurer-- a license plate costs you \$4.10 in Jefferson County. Two license plates costs you \$8.20. OK. And now if you want specialized plates, you have to send off for those, and then they will mail those to you. So there's quite a discrepancy in what, what's here. When you look at the fiscal note on this, there is a decrease in revenue, but there's no corresponding-- the, the expense is very low to start with. So basically, I had some of these organizations ask if we could get everything in line so that there's

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

only one program in the state of Nebraska that we have-- the, the \$40 and \$5, as opposed to \$70.

STORER: So really, there was no-- there was really no reason for the different charges other than one came through-- directly through DMV and one was-- each-- so each one of these specialty license plates was independently brought before this committee, presumably, at some point? OK.

BRANDT: I, I would assume-- through that, I know several of these when I was-- since I've been in the Legislature were presented through the Legislature. I've been on this committee-- this is my third year. So, yeah.

STORER: Thank you.

DeBOER: Are there other questions? Senator Bosn.

BOSN: Thank you. Senator Brandt, in looking at this, one can't help but notice that the second to bottom on your list here is the Husker Spirit plate.

BRANDT: Yes.

BOSN: But it says \$70.

BRANDT: It does.

BOSN: Tell me more.

BRANDT: I, I do not-- I was hoping somebody from DMV would be here to help clean this up a little bit. They were unable to make it today. So-- and that is also the number one license plate. That's the Husker Spirit plate. I-- there is no fund behind that. I expect it's just kind of a revenue raiser for the state and the DMV.

BOSN: Well, who gets the proceeds from that one?

BRANDT: It goes to the DMV Cash Fund.

BOSN: OK. Hmm. OK. I'm recalling from last year-- I got to sit next to you in Transportation and Telecommunications. And I recall, but perhaps incorrectly, that you were going to bring a bill that said we had to do away with personalized plates altogether.

BRANDT: No.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BOSN: No?

BRANDT: No. You recall incorrectly, I'm afraid.

BOSN: OK. So I was wondering if that was the next bill or--

BRANDT: No. The-- no.

BOSN: And-- OK. Following up on that. Assuming we move to a single license plate, what, if any, impact will that have on these plates, if any?

BRANDT: That's kind of up to the DMV and the committee to decide. I would assume no effect. I don't know of anywhere in the bill-- and I could be mistaken-- that it, it signifies one plate or two plates. So essentially, a specialty plate is somewhat of a vanity plate.

BOSN: Right.

BRANDT: And we think of vanity plates as, as you print your name-- if it said Moser on it, for example. Traditionally was a vanity plate. Back in the day, when you just did that on the regular license plates-- and now you can get a wide variety of things. And there's actually quite a few more than these. You saw the military plates and, and such, but they didn't really apply to what we're talking about here today because their numbers could be different. Pearl Harbor survivors, I'm thinking there's only one or two of those plates out there. So there's no minimum requirement on a lot of those military plates or, or the military campaigns. So we intentionally left those off this, off this list.

BOSN: Thank you.

MOSER: OK. Other questions for Senator Brandt? OK. Thank you very much. Supporters for LB343? Proponents for LB343. Welcome.

STEVE EBKE: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is Steve Ebke, and that is spelled S-t-e-v-e E-b-k-e. And I serve as a member of the Nebraska Corn Growers Association Board of Directors. I'm here in support of LB343. And I'm testifying on behalf of the Ag Leaders Working Group. And for your reference, the Ag Leaders Working Group consists of the following nine organizations: Nebraska Cattlemen, Nebraska Corn Growers, Nebraska Farm Bureau, Nebraska Pork Producers, Nebraska Sorghum Producers, Nebraska Soybean Association, Nebraska

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

State Dairy, Nebraska Wheat Growers, and Renewable Fuels Nebraska. And as Senator Brandt discussed, DMV had a statutory process for organizational or specialty plates, and that did require that you accumulate a number of prepaid applications. And if you met other criteria, then they would approve that plate. And again, as Senator Brandt noted, Senator Chambers introduced LB474, the Mountain Lion plate, in 2015, and that bill passed in 2016. And since that time, that-- the language in that bill is pretty much been the template for specialty plates in Nebraska. And as you're going to hear later, Senator Fredrickson's LB568 would further streamline that process. And, and I don't believe that any plates have been established through the DMV process since 2015. And what we're saying is that LB343 simply reduces the license fee for organizational specialty plates from the current \$70 down to \$40. And this reduction provides consistency with the cost of personalized specialty plates that have been approved by the Legislature using the template created by LB474. We thank Senator Brandt for introducing LB343. And we ask the committee to support advancing it out of committee. And so again, I thank you for your consideration today. And I will try to answer any questions.

MOSER: OK. Questions from the committee? Senator Storer.

STORER: Thank you, Chairman Moser. And thank you for, for being here today. I guess I just want to be as clear-- the different-- the, the \$30 difference-- and I don't know if you know where that goes. Mainly what I, what I want to be certain of is reducing that down to \$40 for organizational plates. Is that going to reduce anything that your organization receives?

STEVE EBKE: No. As I think Senator Brandt stated, the, the organizational plates, the, the \$70 right now all goes to-- well, basically to the DMV.

STORER: So for the organizational plates, your organization doesn't--

STEVE EBKE: No.

STORER: --receive any of that. It's just--

STEVE EBKE: That's correct.

STORER: --the recognition of--

STEVE EBKE: Right.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

STORER: --supporting your organization? OK. Thank you.

MOSER: OK. Other questions? Seeing none. Thank you for your testimony.

STEVE EBKE: Thank you.

MOSER: Other supporters for LB343? We received 7 proponent emails, 2 opponent emails, and no neutrals. OK. Last call for supporters. OK. Are there opponents for LB343? Anyone in the neutral for LB343? Senator Brandt.

BRANDT: So, Senator Bosn, we had a chance to look up where the \$70 goes. And this is actually on the organizational plates too, not just the Spirit plates. 60% goes to the DMV Cash Fund, which would be \$42, and 40% goes to the Highway Trust fund, which would be \$28. If that ratio would stay the same on the \$40, it would decrease proportionately. So those plates aren't going to a special fund. It would just decrease that amount. Something that's not factored in here that Fiscal can't account for: as the price gets cheaper, probably more individuals will purchase more plates. And I think we've gotten some comments to that effect, but we can't put a number on that today. So I would answer any questions.

MOSER: Questions for Senator Brandt? Just one, I guess. Well, comment and a question. So I think yesterday we heard that it's around \$4 to print a plate or something like that. And-- so there's considerable revenue from these no-- novelty plates. But none of that money goes to the Autism Society or the state of Nebraska or--

BRANDT: So, Senator Moser, do you see this sheet in front of you? It should be--

MOSER: I don't know. I have such a pile.

BRANDT: --should be laying there. He's handing you one right there.

MOSER: All right.

BRANDT: So the, the--

MOSER: I was, I was in another committee ferrying a bill there, and I got my head spinning. So I got to get back into the--

BRANDT: So the, the top ones here are the \$70 ones that we'd like to reduce. None of those-- all of that goes to the cash fund and the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

Highway Trust Fund. The bottom ones, the current \$40 plates-- so if you look at, like, Breast Cancer Awareness, in parentheses, that excess money goes to UNMC. The Mountain Lion goes to game and parks. The Native American one goes for Native American scholarships.

MOSER: OK.

BRANDT: The, the-- OK.

MOSER: That's what I was trying to remember.

BRANDT: Right. That would be-- these plates down here--

MOSER: OK.

BRANDT: --this bill does not affect where that, where that money is going.

MOSER: You're just working on the \$70 plates.

BRANDT: Right. And we're just basically--

MOSER: And why did we create a special category and charge more for these plates?

BRANDT: Because originally when we started, you had to go through-- all these organizations went through the DMV to get their plates. And then I, I believe Senator Chambers, when he introduced the mountain lion bill, it was in the Legislature. And from that point forward, I believe that all these plates were approved through the Chamber.

MOSER: OK.

BRANDT: So, yeah. We're just trying to, to make it the same price.

MOSER: OK. Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you very much.

BRANDT: All right.

MOSER: Appreciate it. All right. That will close our hearing on LB343. And we'll move to LB563. That's also Senator Brandt's. Welcome again to your committee.

BRANDT: Well, good afternoon, Chairman Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is Senator Tom Brandt, T-o-m B-r-a-n-d-t. I represent Legislative District 32:

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

Fillmore, Thayer, Jefferson, Saline, and southwestern Lancaster Counties. I am here today to introduce LB563. LB563 would give owners of commercial fertilizer trailers the option to purchase a permanent plate instead of renewing their registration annually and replacing the plate every six years. A commercial fertilizer trailer is defined as a fertilizer trailer owned by an individual or business that sells agriculture, fertilizers, or chemicals-- the most common example being anhydrous ammonia tanks. Businesses like the Farmers Co-op own thousands of these trailers. It must spend a significant amount of time applying new registration stickers every year. Additionally, exposure to fertilizer can cause the plates to deteriorate, creating complications when it's time for a replacement. The goal of this legislation is not to reduce the trailer plate fees for businesses, but to streamline the registration process for both trailer owners and county treasurers. A permanent plate option would accomplish just that. We have an amendment forthcoming to address an issue raised by the DMV. As originally written, the bill states that the DMV would distribute the plates. The amendment shifts distribution to county treasurers, aligning with the process used for most other plates and significantly lowering the fiscal impact. I also intend to work with the DMV to clarify other cost estimates in the fiscal note. That concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions.

MOSER: Well, before we start, this was brought up before we had yesterday's hearing where they're talking about allowing three-year registrations, right?

BRANDT: Yeah, but this is-- OK.

MOSER: And those are going to be sent out. They're not going to be distributed by the county, right?

BRANDT: Right. But the point yesterday is if you owned a boat trailer, OK? They would mail you three years worth of stickers. And you have to remember January of every year you'd have to peel the sticker off. And I could be mistaken. Senator DeBoer's shaking her head at me. But what we're talking about with this, this handout on these trailers is we don't want stickers. When you look at a semi-trailer going down the road, a lot of times you says-- it says permanent on the plate. We would put one plate on a trailer and we're done with the plate.

MOSER: And what about the tax every year?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: And the comptroller for the organization would still go in and pay the same taxes every year. Except we don't have to put stickers on the plates or ever change the license plate. The license plate stays with the vehicle as long as you own the vehicle.

MOSER: OK. OK. Questions? Senator Storer.

STORER: Thank you, Chairman. I guess I-- and, and you said that you were going to be working with them on this, but do you-- reading the fiscal note, why would-- do you have any idea why they put in there to hire an additional employee and--

BRANDT: Because--

STORER: --that they would produce 10,000 additional plates?

BRANDT: Yes. Thank you, Senator Storer, for that question. You're going to hear a term in your eight years here called death by fiscal note. And one of the things that happens is quite often we don't get the fiscal note till the, the day of or the day before you-- on a bill that you've worked on for a long, long time. And that-- this was a surprise. But it did highlight a point in our bill that we should have caught. And you got to go to the courthouse to get these plates. In the bill, it said we would mail these plates out. And so that change alone, therefore, they thought they would need one full-time person to mail out license plates. And so the amendment we're proposing takes it back out and moves it back to the courthouse, thus eliminating about \$100,000 out of the fiscal note.

STORER: So are any of those plates currently mailed out? Do you have the option to have these, these plates mailed like you do your--

BRANDT: I don't know. I-- you know, I know I have the-- I have that option personally. And I don't know if you exercise that option, but maybe one of the testifiers after me could answer that question. There will be several testifiers testifying on this.

STORER: And then just the last question. 10,000 extra plates, wouldn't there be fewer plates printed? I mean, if this-- if they were a permanent plate--

BRANDT: Yes. Yeah. Well-- and there's another-- yeah. And the fiscal goes with what fiscal knows today.

STORER: OK.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

BRANDT: OK? Yeah.

STORER: Thank you.

BRANDT: Yeah.

MOSER: Other questions? Thank you very much.

BRANDT: You bet.

MOSER: Anybody here to speak in support of LB563? We had 3 proponent online comments, no opponent, and no neutral. Welcome.

ALLAN ZUMPF: Good afternoon, Chairman Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is Allan Zumpfe, A-l-l-a-n Z-u-m-p-f-e. And I'm the CEO of Farmers Cooperative that Mr. Brandt referenced here. I'm here to offer my support for LB563. And thank you, Senator Brandt, for taking on this issue. Farmers Cooperative licenses roughly 2,000-- a little over 2,000 fertilizer trailers-- so those anhydrous ammonia trailers, as well as liquid trailers. So those trailers get used for approximately one month in the spring and one month in the fall. But, but the, the struggle comes when it does come to licensing. We have a full-time person that, that needs to go to ten county treasurers' offices to obtain these, these registrations. And then these trailers are spread through 45 locations in Nebraska through these ten counties and to-- to get them all matched up and to apply the stickers. Then-- besides that then, we have 5-- about 600 pickups, trucks, you know, transport trailers, and transport vehicles, passenger vehicles. So total count's about 2,600. So this is a very busy person during the month of January, which that's our renewal timeframe. None of the la-- none of the plates get sent out. We don't want them sent out. We want to organize them and then take them, take them to our locations. Because we-- you know, there's, there's a lot to it. I think earlier someone said, I do it myself because I don't want it to be screwed up. Trust me, the CEO does not go do that. But there is a chance for screwing it up. And we, we do trust our people to get it right. So the challenge came when they renew every six years. And I believe-- this was misspoken, '22. I believe it was '23, was the last time we changed plates. When they did that, they did not take a plate off and put a new plate on of the same number. They renumbered all the plates. So we now have a registration. We have to go with a VIN number to match up the plate to-- and create another level of task for people to get that done. Again, a, a permanent plate would solve a lot of these issues

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

for us. We are by no means looking to cut costs by, by not having to pay for our registration fees and not having to register. We're-- that's, that's the right thing to do. You know, if we need to go pay for the permanent plate every six years, so be it. We're not after cutting costs, but we are after just the efficiencies and administrative costs, both from our standpoint as well as the treasurer's office to, to fulfill that for us, so. Again-- if anybody has any questions.

MOSER: Questions? Senator Bosn.

BOSN: Thank you. Thank you for being here. Can you tell me roughly the lifespan of one of these trailers? How long do you own one before you have to replace it?

ALLAN ZUMPF: Anhydrous ammonia trailers, we probably have them dating back in the '70s right now. So 50 years. And they're still-- we get them tested to make sure they can pressurize-- a pressurized tank [INAUDIBLE] familiar with it, but. So it has to be-- to go through testing every five years so it will not be taken out. Liquid trailers, that's probably a ten-year process for a liquid trailer-- poly tank, if you will.

BOSN: And you're driving them 2 months out of the year but paying for them 12 months out of the year?

ALLAN ZUMPF: We are.

BOSN: Yeah.

ALLAN ZUMPF: Yeah. Spring one-- about a month-- for the-- [INAUDIBLE] about a month in the fall, a month in the spring. Liquid trailers are mostly in the spring.

BOSN: Thank you.

ALLAN ZUMPF: Mm-hmm.

MOSER: Are there questions? Who gets the ticket if you get the plate on the wrong trailer?

ALLAN ZUMPF: I'm, I'm afraid the company does, yeah.

MOSER: But even though you only use it two months, it's worth it to you because it's critical to the producer to get fertilizer and--

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

ALLAN ZUMPF: Absolutely.

MOSE: --it's critical to your business to sell fertilizer and--

ALLAN ZUMPF: Absolutely. It is. You're-- that's 100% correct. Yes.

MOSE: You're going to want to work to make this all work.

ALLAN ZUMPF: Yes, we do.

MOSE: Did you listen or hear any of the discussion from yesterday's hearing where they talked about issuing plates for up to three years?

ALLAN ZUMPF: I'm, I'm familiar with the bill because I sit on the legislative action committee for the Nebraska Co-op Council, so we just reviewed the bill last week. Yes.

MOSE: Yeah. Well, I don't know if that's going anywhere, but that's another potential solution.

ALLAN ZUMPF: We would be very-- in very much support of that as well.

MOSE: Yeah. Other questions? All right. Thank you very much.

ALLAN ZUMPF: Thank you for your time.

MOSE: Appreciate your testimony. Anybody else to support LB563? All right. Welcome.

CODY LIGHTWINE: Good afternoon, Chairperson Moser and committee members. My name is Cody Lightwine, C-o-d-y L-i-g-h-t-w-i-n-e. I currently serve as Risk Management and Safety Coordinator at Norder Supply, which is a family-owned ag retailer. Been in business for 49 years. Currently, we have about 187 employees. I also serve as the mayor of the city of Geneva and have been on city council prior to being elected as mayor. I know how difficult it is to cast a vote on a controversial issue, but I also know how enjoyable it is to be able to fix an issue for your constituents. I worked with Senator Brandt in the Legislature last year to successfully increase the legal length limit of straight trucks from 40 to 45 feet. I remember many of your faces from that afternoon. Senator Brandt encouraged me to find other simple things we could do to make life better for Nebraskans. In discussion with friends that work at other ag businesses-- one of them at Farmers Co-op-- as well as trade associations that represent us, we came up with the idea to kind of permanently plate these fertilizer

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

trailers for their life. We have nearly 500 at Norder Supply-- again, scattered across many counties in Nebraska-- just like Farmers Cooperative. Our team spends hours every year organizing, putting on stickers, and sorting through the process of renewals. In years where we must change out the plates, I would tell you our team spends in excess of 100 hours with those tasks and then going out and working on the physical part of changing out the plate. As like most businesses, we do that in January. That is not a pleasant time to be outside laying in the rocks fighting rusty nuts and bolts. I also believe that this would help our county courthouses out by lessening the burden to their staff if we could permanently plate these trailers. They spend as much time on it as what our staffs do. Their paperwork burden is probably larger than what ours is to go along with that. I think these plates have been used successfully-- I, I'm going to say for more than 25 years because that's all the further back I can remember, but I believe it's since deregulation, which happened in the early '80s on interstate semi-trailers. So the, the concept is out there, and it has worked. And as Allan said, this isn't about fees. We're OK with the fees as they are. What this-- we-- what we hope to accomplish with this is saving ag businesses, farmers, and counties money by reducing the amount of time everyone spends in the license plate process. Thank you.

MOSER: OK. Questions for the testifier? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

CODY LIGHTWINE: Thank you.

MOSER: Other supporters for LB563?

ADAM FESER: Good afternoon, Chairman Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is Adam Feser, A-d-a-m F-e-s-e-r. And I'm the Director of Cooperative Advancement for the Nebraska Cooperative Council. We're a statewide nonprofit trade association representing nearly all of Nebraska's supply and marketing agricultural cooperatives, and several rural electric and telephone cooperatives as well. The council supports LB563 and wants to thank Senator Brandt for bringing this bill. As you heard from Allan, getting fertilizer trailers registered is an extremely time-consuming and cumbersome process for our members. We asked for numbers and heard back from 17 of our 23 supply and marketing co-op members. So between those 17, there were 4-- there are 14,351 fertilizer trailers. With the other six included, there'd probably be, you know, a few thousand more. This bill gives us the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

opportunity to save cooperatives and counties countless hours of administrative toil handling that many stickers every year and that many plates every six years by creating a more efficient process. Council supports policy that enables our members to focus more of their time and energy serving their farmer owners and growing Nebraska's economy. And I do want to reiterate, you know, we, we want to get this right. We're willing to work with Senator Brandt and work with DMV to make sure, you know, we pay the appropriate fees, that the process is, is streamlined and meets their standards, all those things. We just think this is a great idea that would make life a lot better for a lot of folks. So with that, I hope you consider advancing LB563 to General File with any amendments that might be necessary. I thank you for your time. And I'll try my best to answer your questions.

MOSER: OK. Comments from the committee? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Other supporters for LB563? Welcome.

SCOTT MERRITT: Good afternoon, Chairman, members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Scott Merritt, S-c-o-t-t M-e-r-r-i-t-t. I'm here today representing the Nebraska Agri-Business Association. We are a trade association that represents manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, and retailers to supply inputs for Nebraska's farmers and ranchers. We're here in support of this bill, LB563. As you heard by some other-- previous testifiers, I'm not going to reiterate a lot of-- and be repetitive. One thing that's been kind of interesting on this, this was truly a grassroots movement on how to try to fix an issue and a problem that's out in the countryside. Just one more point that I'll bring out. As you've heard-- and the feedback that we got-- is many of these trailers are moved all over a six, eight, ten county area. So at the end of the so-called season or the window of opportunity when they do have to go in and relicense or retag them, a lot of the times these trailers will be at five or eight different locations that they never started at. So you can imagine the, the headaches trying to work through this process with all the counties when these trailers have been distributed all over the trade area. So with that, I think the testifier in front of me did a very good job. I think we have the template [INAUDIBLE] so to say on semis that have been running permanent tags. And we know how to do this. And we have had some discussion with the DMV earlier in the year-- or, early-- late last year. They seemed receptive and open and suggested that we try to come up with a solution. So I think that maybe this is a solution that we can all work with. With that, I will take any questions from the committee.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

MOSER: Senator Guereca.

GUERECA: Just had one that, that came up. And thank you for being here, Mr. Merritt. Obviously, a lot of different machines and trailers are used in our agriculture operations. Do you think that fertilizer trailers are the least used, given that they're only use two months out of the year?

SCOTT MERRITT: Yeah. I mean, it, it-- we talked about the spring and the fall usage of these trailers, and that's one thing I had in my written testimony. These are very unique trailers. I know there was some discussion last year-- well, what about boat trailers and what about-- but these trailers have one purpose. It's to move the, the, the product from the retail location to the farmers and let the farmer use it in the field and then go back and be reloaded and, and traded again. That's where we get into-- these trailers will end up all over at different locations because if Farmer X finishes a field and instead of going back to the, the headquarter where it was originally loaded, he's going to-- I'm going to drop it off at, at one of your satellite locations, which is only a mile from my house, then that trailer starts the whole cycle. So these are unique pieces of equipment, and they're very expensive for the short time they need it. But as the chairman said earlier, when a farmer needs inputs, he needs inputs that day. So it's a very, very timely process.

GUERECA: Thank you for your testimony.

MOSER: OK. Other questions? Seeing none. Thank you very much. Other supporters for this bill? OK. Is there anyone here to testify in the opposition? Seeing none. Is anyone here to testify in the neutral? It appears, Senator Brandt, you're welcome to close.

BRANDT: So as was stated by some of the testifiers, there will be less burden on our courthouses. If you've ever gone to the smaller courthouses and stand in line to license vehicles, invariably-- you know, I can speak personally. I have, have ten motorized vehicles and four trailers. Something's always screwed up. And if you had to bring in 2,200 of these, you can imagine what that's like. I don't think they emphasize enough: fertilizer is very corrosive. OK? The only way you're getting these plates office with a side grinder. I would be shocked if you could-- if a lot of these wouldn't bolt. So that's how you've got to replace these plates. And just the co-op side is probably 16,000 trailers. You could probably double that number because we've got that many private retailers in the state. If you

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

told me 32,000, that wouldn't surprise me at all. So with that, I would take any questions.

MOSER: Questions from the committee? Senator Storer.

STORER: Thank you, Chairman. Not, not really a question, I guess. I just, I just want to take the opportunity to say thank you for bringing a commonsense bill.

BRANDT: You're welcome.

STORER: It's refreshing.

MOSER: Well, I might add, every commonsense bill runs into some kind of snafu, so hang on and, and wait for the other shoe to drop. If it, if it looks really good and everything's easy, there's something we're missing. Sorry.

DeBOER: It's true.

MOSER: So. Then for LB563, we had 3 proponents, no opponents, and no neutral. Thank you, Senator.

BRANDT: Thank you.

MOSER: That brings us to LB568.

FREDRICKSON: Yes.

MOSER: Senator Fredrickson.

FREDRICKSON: All right. Hello. Good afternoon.

MOSER: Welcome to your committee.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you. Are you ready for your favorite license plate bill?

MOSER: Yeah. I love license plate bills.

FREDRICKSON: I love it. All right. Good afternoon, Chair Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. My name is John Fredrickson, J-o-h-n F-r-e-d-r-i-c-k-s-o-n. And I represent the 20th Legislative District. I'm here today to introduce LB568. This bill establishes a Home of Arbor Day license plate. Like myself, you may be surprised to find that Nebraska does not currently

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

offer an Arbor Day plate despite being home of this national holiday. This bill is an opportunity for us to celebrate our state's environmental leadership and enable Nebraskans to show their support for tree planting and conservation. The license plates will be designed in consultation with both the Arbor Day Foundation and the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum to ensure the final plate design reflects Arbor Day's focus on planting trees and educating communities on the importance of planting trees. Under LB568, Nebraskans applying for an alphanumeric Home of Arbor Day plate will be charged a \$5 fee. 100% of those proceeds will be directed to the Statewide Arboretum. The fee for personalized message plates will be \$40. 25% of that fee will go to the DMV Cash Fund, and the other 75% will go to the Statewide Arboretum. This bill also creates the Home of Arbor Day Plate Cash Fund, housed under the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. The board shall use this fund to award grants to the Statewide Arboretum for the purposes of tree planting, garden making, and environmental outreach. This way, Nebraskans with Arbor Day plates can be certain their fee payment is furthering the mission of the Arbor Day-- of Arbor Day in our state. Now, this is the exciting part of the bill. LB568 is also a cleanup and harmonization bill. This bill has been drafted to organize several sections of existing license plate statute to streamline the process for introducing new license plate legislation in the future. Different specialty license plates have been established with differing fees and funding structures, which has complicated statute over the years. These updates are crucial for maintaining clear, effective license plate policy. LB568 is a necessary step to refine Nebraska statutes and improve efficiency. You will have received a letter from the DMV on this as well, but I want to let you know that we will be filing an amendment to correct a minor drafting oversight pushing the implementation date to the beginning of next year. A representative from the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum will be testifying behind me. They will provide additional information about their organization and the impact of this bill. Thank you for your time and attention. And I'm happy to answer any questions.

MOSER: Questions for Senator Fredrickson? Yes, Senator Bosn.

BOSN: I'm looking to be sure, but isn't there a license plate right now that has the good life, the Arbor Day, something on it?

FREDRICKSON: There is not.

BOSN: Really?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

FREDRICKSON: So you are-- you were equally as surprised as I was. But our-- when you enter our state, it says, the home of Arbor Day, on the official-- the good life sort of signs for the state, but no license plate.

BOSN: OK. Thank you.

FREDRICKSON: Yep.

BOSN: Oh, it doe-- we do have one that says, the home of Arbor Day, but it's not an Arbor Day plate. OK.

FREDRICKSON: I stand corrected.

BOSN: That's what-- no, no. I just-- it's not an Arbor Day plate. So that's-- that's what you said.

MOSER: OK. Other questions? Thank you.

FREDRICKSON: All right.

MOSER: Supporters of LB568? Proponents, come on up. Welcome.

HANNA PINNEO: Welco-- thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Moser and members of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. And thank you, Senator Fredrickson, for introducing the bill. My name is Hanna Pinneo. That's H-a-n-n-a P-i-n-n-e-o. And I am the Executive Director of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum. The Statewide Arboretum is part of the Nebraska Forest Service and the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. And I am here today testifying in a proponent position, representing myself, sharing information related to LB568. I do not represent the University of Nebraska in this testimony. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum was founded nearly 50 years ago on the idea that the people of Nebraska should have access to green spaces and tree cover. Nebraska, always a unique state in how it represents the people, chose to create a network of multiple arboretum across the state as opposed to one central arboretum, making us the only statewide arboretum in the country. Today, Nebraska has more than 100 arboretum and landscape affiliate sites across the state, from Nebraska City to Chadron, for the public to visit and enjoy. This is fitting as Nebraska is home of Arbor Day, which celebrates and encourages tree planting in all communities for the benefit of all who seek to sit under the shade of a tree. While our communities and their tree resources are ever-changing, over the last 20 years we've seen

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

unprecedented threats to our community forests. From the discovery of the invasive emerald ash borer in 2016 to the Arbor Day tornadoes and summer windstorms of 2024 that destroyed thousands of trees in the Greater Omaha and Lincoln areas, our trees have borne the brunt of Nebraska's tough weather. While trees are a community resource, community budgets often have a hard time keeping up with the rising costs of tree care and tree removal, which has resulted in a declining tree canopy across Nebraska. The Nebraska Statewide Arboretum has led the state in addressing community tree needs. We've distributed more than \$10 million in funds to communities for tree planting, garden making, education, and community building. We've been honored to be part of volunteer and municipal efforts across the state, from McCook to South Sioux County-- or, South Sioux City and everywhere in between. We've taken the tree-planting spirit instilled in us as Arbor Day state residents and walked alongside communities as they worked to plant trees that provide environmental, health, and economic benefits to their neighbors. In 2024 alone, the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum partnered with 97 communities to plant more than 28,000 trees, perennials, grasses, and shrubs in landscapes across the state. 54% of our project funds support plantings in rural communities. This bill would provide the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum with another source of funding we could use to disburse grants to the communities while also giving Nebraskans a way to proclaim their love of trees as they drive around Nebraska and beyond. We will be responsible stewards of the funds, ensuring they are used to support Nebraska communities in their tree-planting efforts in the true spirit of Arbor Day. This bill is a wonderful opportunity to embrace our roots as a tree planters' state. Thank you and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

MOSER: OK. I don't see any questions. Thank you. Anybody else to hear-- that's here to speak in support? Welcome.

KAREN PESEK: Hello. Good afternoon, senators. My name is Karen Pesek, K-a-r-e-n P-e-s-e-k. And I am here in support of LB586. As a board member of the Nebraska Statewide Arboretum, my connection to the organization began a few years ago when I was looking for funding for an urban landscaping project in the South Omaha Business Improvement, Improvement District. The Arboretum became more than just a funding source. They were true partners, providing expertise, labor, and plans to restore 69 planters along Nebraska's busiest commercial corridor, corridor in south Omaha. This partnership turned into a multiyear effort to rebuild-- revitalize the landscape, benefiting both businesses and our neighborhood. Inspired by their impact, I joined the NSA board, where I've seen their commitment to ensuring all

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Transportation and Telecommunications Committee February 4, 2025
Rough Draft

Nebraskans, rural and urban, have access to green spaces and tree cover. LB568 would expand funding for the Arboretum's grant programs to allowing more opportunities to plant trees and restore landscapes through projects like mine. It also offers Nebraskans, Nebraskans a simple way to show their love for trees every time they drive. I urge you to support this bill and help Nebraska continue its legacy as a tree planters' state. Any questions?

MOSER: OK. Questions?

KAREN PESEK: Thank you.

MOSER: Seeing none. Thank you very much. Are there more supporters to testify for LB568? Is there anyone in the opposition to testify on LB568? Is there anyone to testify in the neutral on LB568? We received 9 proponent letters, no opponents, and we had 3 neutral. Welcome back, Senator.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you. Well, I'll just keep this clo-- quick. I would appreciate if the committee were to advance this bill. I think it's an opportunity. I think Arbor Day truly is a point of statewide pride. It's-- was founded here in our state, and it's something that is celebrated on the national level. As you heard from the testimony that came after my opening, the Statewide Arboretum does really incredible work in both urban and rural parts of the state. And this is an opportunity to continue to support their work, so. Happy to take any questions.

MOSER: Great. Questions for Senator Fredrickson? Seeing none. Thank you very much.

FREDRICKSON: Thank you.

MOSER: All right. That'll end our hearing for today. Thank you very much.