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see an end to our budget crisis. But more importantly than the jobs, more important than the jobs that were located in rural Nebraska was the knowledge that we gained from that experience. Do you realize that over 60 communities applied for that call center? Over two-thirds of them were eliminated immediately because of insufficient phone lines. That indicates to me that we have not done a good enough job in making sure that the rural part of our state has adequate infrastructure. And to me, infrastructure is roads, telephone lines, and broadband communications. I promise you that I will do everything I can to increase that infrastructure throughout the state. Looking to the future, a lawsuit was recently filed. This lawsuit alleges that the Universal Services Fund should be eliminated because it was an improper delegation of the Legislature's taxing authority. If abolished, I ask you to imagine the devastating impact that the elimination of the Universal Service Fund will have on rural Nebraska. This is an area of an extreme importance that must be dealt with today in order to protect the phone systems throughout all of Nebraska. I entered this race late. And after talking to you, I...to many of you, I realize that a lot of you have made commitments to others. And I respect that. Senator Baker mentioned that he's served on this committee over the past few years. And while I have always had an interest in the telecommunications industry, I have not served on it. But I will point out that the two former Chairs of that committee hadn't served on it either, as I understand it, prior to their Chairmanship. I simply say to you that even though I am a senator from Omaha, I am a state senator. And all of you that have worked with me over the past four years know that. I support all of Nebraska. And I would appreciate your support for this Chairmanship. Thank you very much.

PRESIDENT HEINEMAN: Thank you, Senator Bourne. The Chair would recognize Senator Thompson.

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Lieutenant Governor, members of the body. I rise to put my name in nomination for Chair of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. I served on the committee for three years, prior to moving to the Appropriations Committee. I have maintained a strong interest in what happens in that committee, and have sponsored