

Transcript Prepared By the Clerk of the Legislature
Transcriber's Office

Health and Human Services Committee
March 23, 2010

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Health and Human Services met at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2010, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Tim Gay, Chairperson; Dave Pankonin, Vice Chairperson; Kathy Campbell; Mike Gloor; Gwen Howard; Arnie Stuthman; and Norman Wallman. Senators absent: None. []

SENATOR GAY: We're going to get started on a public hearing on some appointments. Thank you all for coming who are able to come. I know this is kind of late, and we're getting together. We've got about a half an hour here to do. I know three out of five are here today who are able to join us, so we certainly appreciate you coming today. I'm just going to go in the order they're on the agenda here. I'm going to dispense with introductions and, well, no, I'm not going to. I'm Senator Tim Gay from Papillion La Vista. I'm going to start at my right just so you all know. Go ahead, Michelle.

[CONFIRMATION]

MICHELLE CHAFFEE: I'm Michelle Chaffee, legal counsel. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Mike Gloor, senator from Grand Island. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Senator Wallman from Cortland. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Arnie Stuthman from Platte Center. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Senator Howard from Omaha, District 9. [CONFIRMATION]

ERIN MACK: Erin Mack, committee clerk. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: And Erin has probably worked with many of you to try to arrange your schedules, appreciate that. Senator Pankonin, I know had a lunch appointment. He's going to try to get here as quick as possible and Senator Campbell as well, but I think they will try to make it. But anyway, thank you all for coming. We're going to get started with Raymond Meester on the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. How are you doing, Mr. Meester? [CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: Fine. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: And what we usually do, just tell us a little bit about yourself and if there's any questions for you, we do have a bio that you turned in, but just tell us a little bit about yourself and. [CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: I'm Raymond Meester. I reside in Senator Avery's district here

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in Lincoln. I've lived in Lincoln almost 16 years now. I'm pastor at Heritage Presbyterian Church here in Lincoln. I'm what we call in the field a CODA, a child of deaf adults. Both of my parents are deaf as well as four uncles and aunts are deaf and have been very active with the deaf community. We have a deaf ministry in our church, and I've served on the commission back in the late nineties into this decade and then re-upping for a second term now on the commission, currently serving as a chair of the commission.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Oh, okay, good. All right, any questions from committee members? I've got one for you real quick. Appreciate your service, first of all. That's a lot of time, but what have you found as far as anything we could improve as far as communications skills? Because we, you know, we bring people in, but if you ever need anything...I know Senator Avery is your senator, but I always think it's good for Health Committee members, if you can...and Senator Campbell just joined us and Senator Pankonin. But if you ever have anything that you'd like to share with us, sometimes it's best...feel free to contact us. But is there anything right now you're working on that we should (inaudible)...? [CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: Well, my mother...we moved her here about 4.5 years ago, and we're still having issues with the hospitals not providing interpreters and that kind of stuff. And I know we've been working on a bill for that and in the process so.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: The interpreter bill for all public places is a little bit of a...okay.
[CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: Right, right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Any other questions? I don't see any. All right. Thank you for coming in, appreciate it. [CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: I'm just going to say too, Mr. Meester, what we're going to do, we're going to have a hearing today and then pretty quickly we'll vote on these, possibly even this afternoon, kick them out to the Legislature. And then they are voted on out there, and then you'll be notified fairly quickly so thank you for your service too.
[CONFIRMATION]

RAYMOND MEESTER: Okay. Thank you, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Okay. Marcia Anderson...I know Marcia is here. [CONFIRMATION]

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MARCIA ANDERSON: Hello. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Hello, welcome. Go ahead and tell us a little bit about yourself.
[CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: My name is Marcia Anderson. I'm being appointed to the state Foster Care Review Board, and I have been on the local board since, I think, about '95, '96, so a long time, and I'm representing District 2, Georgie of the local board? I've been on there, but I don't know what my district is. I am an attorney for a natural gas pipeline company, and I've followed through with this request to apply to the state board because I think the children are important, and I've seen through the time that I've spent with the foster care program the advantages it has made, I think, into the oversight of children. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Okay. Any questions from any members? Senator Stuthman.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Thank you, Senator Gay. Marcia, thank you for volunteering to be on the Foster Care Review Board. Do you see the Foster Care Review Board more with attention drawn towards the child or to the foster parents and the system that they operate in? [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: You mean the issues that we review? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Well, the issues that you review, do you pay more attention to the issues of the foster child or more of the issues of the foster care system?
[CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: You know, I think really they're intertwined, and I think the child really does not succeed unless the system succeeds. And so, in reviewing the cases over time, I think we've seen where you've got to really concentrate and elevate both sides. So sometimes, you know, in our groups we'll notice that the child needs something, you know, whether it's a...you know, the meds are too much or whatever. Sometimes the foster parent isn't getting the support they need, you know, through HHS or they're having, you know, some sort of communication problems. So sometimes we talk about that with folks. Sometimes it's the parent that needs more focused attention or we suggest, you know, a different counseling or something there. So I would say, on the local board, we look at all aspects of that and make recommendations on. I don't know if that answers your question. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Yes, it does, and additional question would be, do you think you can take the value of knowledge from the local board to the state board?
[CONFIRMATION]

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MARCIA ANDERSON: I think so. I think the local...having representatives of the local board on the state board probably brings that ground floor observation of, you know, even just how the local board interacts with itself. What are the practicalities with some of the findings and papers that we're asked to utilize in making those findings? You know, I know that they know that all the time, you know, they solicit information from local boards and from the folks that, you know, oversee our local boards. But I do think that, you know, being on this for a long time, I've seen it evolve and change, and I do think that...that maybe that point of view would be helpful. And I think that's whoever offered me up here thought too so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: Well, thank you, Marcia, for those comments, and I think there's real value in people that have been in the trenches working on the local level and then they can move on to, you know, be on the Foster Care Review Board with this situation. I think that is a lot of value to your comments as far as the board is concerned, so thank you for willing to do that. [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Well, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Senator Gloor. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you. Ms. Anderson, I probably should infer something on this, but I also think that there's a responsibility to ask, and that is you've declined to move to Houston with TransCanada... [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: That must mean that you're committed to staying in Nebraska, and so our appointment of you won't be followed up with a letter of resignation six months later because you've decided to take a job elsewhere. [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: No. Nebraska is home. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Any other questions? [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: That's exactly why I told them no. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: That's what I inferred. [CONFIRMATION]

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MARCIA ANDERSON: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: I've got a question for you to kind of follow up Senator Stuthman's question, being on a local board and now going to the state board. Is there anything there that you want to kind of tackle that you said, boy, you know, if I ever get up there, he's what I would fix? Is there any issues that...? [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: You know, I got a call kind of out of the blue to somebody suggests that there was an opening, and for me to apply. And I had not thought of...I joined the local board in '95 when I graduated from law school, went kind of late, and still trying to figure out, I guess, what I'm going to be when I grow up. And very happy to serve at the local board and never thought of really taking it, you know, any higher. So when I was asked to do it, I thought, well, what can I contribute? More, Senator, along your questions. You know, at the local board, what do I have maybe to offer to the state board? So I didn't approach it with an idea of applying with...or being on the board with an agenda of items to fix. I guess I have more of a...I'd like to get on and see where maybe my talents and knowledge would be helpful. So I don't... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah, so no pressing...I get to take care of this kind of... [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Yeah, I didn't see anything that was terribly wrong or, you know, at the local level to say ooh, man, I'm going to get on there and, you know, I could fix it. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah. But as Senator Stuthman said, and that local...local experience will certainly help. That's for sure so. [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Okay. Any other questions? Don't see any. Thank you for your service. [CONFIRMATION]

MARCIA ANDERSON: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah, all right. Gabriella McTate for Foster Care Review Board. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Good afternoon. My name is Gay McTate. I'm a clinical social worker in Omaha. I spend about half of my time doing therapy with families and children and the other half doing consultation and training. And I have the opportunity to do consulting with schools and child-care centers and so I get to learn a lot from children and families. I'm very honored to be appointed to the Foster Care Review Board. I think

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the work that the board does is very important. I guess, you know, I think all of us have responsibilities to children, not just our own, and so to be in a position to be able to work to ensure that good things happen for kids and families is important to me so.

[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah, and this is your first appointment. First time. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Yes, it is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Okay. Any questions? Senator Howard. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Thank you, Chairman Gay. Welcome. I'm so glad to see you.

[CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: I just want to tell you how much I appreciate that you're willing to give your time to do this because I know you're busy and certainly have had a wonderful practice for years and years, but thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Senator Wallman. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Thank you, Chairman Gay. Yeah, thank you for serving and do you think that our foster parents are getting enough education as far as the problems they may encounter with children? [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: You know, Senator, I guess I would defer answering that till I get an opportunity to learn a little bit more about what we're seeing through the board. Over the years, I've seen lots of good training go on for foster parents. I also know they're asked to do a lot, that children are coming into our system with some pretty significant problems so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Having attended Voices for Children in Omaha and a foster care child gave her testimony and after one, two, three, finally found a good foster parent, but...so I think it's a very, very important job you have. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Yes, yeah. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Senator Campbell. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Yes. I'd just like to draw my colleagues' attention to the fact

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that the other board that you served on was the Child Abuse Prevention Board, and it was my honor truly to work with Gay at that point. I really appreciate it; I learned a lot in those...what I call early years of advocacy from all of you. I can highly speak for the...we'd be just great to have you on the Foster Care Board. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Well, thank you, Kathy. I appreciate that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Well, I've got one thing, and you don't brag yourself up, the senators (inaudible)...social worker of the year you got at one time (laughter). That's pretty good. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: You know, you volunteer for things, and it just (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Oh now, you're being modest so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: I don't think so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: It's better than money. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: (Laugh) People don't go into my field for money, Senator (laugh). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Or mine. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Well, thank you for your service. Any other questions? All right. Thank you all for coming today and thank you for your service, appreciate it. And like I say, we'll get these going and then try and get back with you fairly quickly here, so we want to get it on the agenda fairly quickly so. [CONFIRMATION]

GABRIELLA McTATE: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Okay. Thank you all. You bet. All right, and then for committee members, there are two other appointments that you see in front of you: Susan Petersen for the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and then Camille Ohri, and you have those in front of you. If you have any questions you would like to...review those and if you have any questions, just contact Erin. Put them in writing through an e-mail or just call her up and we'll try to get you some answers if there's anything you see that you would like to get followed up on. But just kind of glancing at them, I... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Are they reappointments? [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR GAY: Let's see here. No, one is a new appointment, I think.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Oh, they're both new. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah. And then...this is (inaudible) letter too with her resume. And then,...well, one is new. Yeah, they're both new. So...but if you...or I wonder also maybe you can look at who their senator is, who their state senator is, and maybe they will know something about that too. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Do we know why they couldn't come? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Kind of short notice really. I mean, it's just one of those things, kind of a conflict. These were a little late, so what we did, we contacted them, and we wanted to kind of get them on our agenda. So in fairness to them, we kind of rushed this just so we could kind of get them out there. Otherwise, they'd have to wait possibly, so we figured do this just at one time so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: And we didn't want to set up a phone conversation?
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: They're just...they weren't available to do that, and I didn't want to do that so. But feel free to call them if you got any questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: We're lucky we had the three here. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WALLMAN: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Yeah. I mean, it is kind of short notice. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HOWARD: Well, Gay is from Omaha. I don't know where Marcia is from, but I guess we could look. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: O'Neill, so Cap's area. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: O'Neill? They just got done with St. Pat's, so she couldn't make it (laugh). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: I don't think the...anyway, with that, that's...anybody got any...and on those, we can just do off the balcony or we can even do that actually. Let's do this. Unless somebody has any questions on the three that were here. Was there any comment or anything on those? [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR STUTHMAN: Move to advance the three? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Well, we're going to go in exec session in a minute, so I probably should do that. Let's do that. Can I get a motion to go into exec session? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR STUTHMAN: I'll move. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GAY: Senator Stuthman. Seconded by Senator Wallman. All those in favor, say aye. [CONFIRMATION]