

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Health and Human Services met at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20, 2012, in Room 1510 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Kathy Campbell, Chairperson; Mike Gloor, Vice Chairperson; Dave Bloomfield; Tanya Cook; Gwen Howard; Bob Krist; and Paul Lambert. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR CAMPBELL: (Recorder malfunction)...you go from one meeting to the next and sometimes you run into problems. We will open the meeting of the Health and Human Services Committee public hearings and our first agenda item is gubernatorial appointments to the Board of Emergency Services. Linda Jensen? Linda, are you here?
[CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Just have a chair, please. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And I probably should be doing this for the benefit of the clerk, but could you state your name for the record and spell it, please? [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Yes. Linda L. Jensen, L-i-n-d-a, middle initial L; Jensen, J-e-n-s-e-n.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, welcome to the Health Committee hearings. And we much appreciate your services because yours is a reappointment, is it not?
[CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Yes, it is, um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, tell us a little bit about your experience in your first term, what do you think...you thought really went well or some issues that you think may be coming up. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Well, I'm very grateful for the opportunity to have served that first term and really feel like I have learned a lot about the EMS Board and about the state of Nebraska, about some of our challenges, and some of the things that we can do to meet those challenges. We were just talking, before I came up to the podium here, about it really takes a while to be able to get acclimated and to get and gain an understanding of what is involved with being a board member. So I treasure that experience, and I'm grateful for the opportunity for a reappointment because I think,

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

going into my next few years here, I will be able to be of more value to the board.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Okay, questions from the senators for Ms. Jensen? Yes, Senator Gloor. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you, Senator Campbell. I just...this is not intended to be a trick question, but I really would like to know what your thoughts are about this piece of legislation we have in front of us that would remove the term "immediate" from, I think, the description of what EMTs are capable of doing. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: I actually came to testify... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: ...when that first was introduced. And after some study, I have realized that many of the things that the paramedics and EMTs do in the state of Nebraska are actually not urgent. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Urgent, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Exactly. They do some things like blood pressure checks at their pancake feeds, they do some activities, standby at school activities, athletic events. They are constantly being more and more involved in community events: screenings, some health checks, some prevention activities, some education. So I really believe that it actually describes more accurately what they're currently doing and does not change their scope of practice. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Okay, I appreciate that, and I agree with you; and I did some soul searching also, but ultimately wasn't concerned. I think the biggest pushback is the slippery slope, getting the camel's nose under the tent; all of those arguments about what it could lead to. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: But I'm glad to hear that. It gives me a little more comfort with at least my stand on it. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: I think that there was maybe some fear on...from different groups that it would change their scope of practice, but I don't think that was indicated.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

LINDA JENSEN: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Other questions that the senators have? Ms. Jensen, I note on your application that you received the Kenneth Kimball Award for your work in eastern Nebraska. Where does that award come from? I mean, what organization gives that? [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Oh, I'm very glad you asked. I was very honored to receive that award. I received it at the EMS conference in Kearney, Nebraska, and I believe that was in 1993 when I received that award. Very honored to have been given that, and it's given once a year to recognize anyone in the state of Nebraska who has contributed to the enhancement or the furthering of EMS. And some of my colleagues had recognized that I had, through the years...starting in about 1980, I have worked to build a program of EMS continuing education that has come from Immanuel Medical Center in Omaha. We have a strong working relationship with four volunteer rescue squads there, and then we have branched out and worked with Omaha Fire Department. And in fact, one of the things that I'm currently doing, I'll go back now this afternoon, after this, to Immanuel and we'll have--at 3:00 to 4:00 we'll have--squad run reviews with Omaha Fire. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Interesting. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: And so I think it was based on some of those things that I've done, that I received that award. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, you have had a long, extensive career in the EMS area; and I'm sure that comes as a great help to the board because of your past experience, so highly involved in your professional field. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Seeing no other questions from the Senators, what will happen now is--I can't imagine that we wouldn't forward your name to the full Legislature--but they do vote on it and then you will receive your reappointment. So thank you for your service to the state and for your willingness to continue with that service. [CONFIRMATION]

LINDA JENSEN: Thank you very much for the opportunity. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GLOOR: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR COOK: Thanks. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Our next nominee is Scott...is it Wiebe? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Wiebe. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Wiebe? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Wiebe, Wiebe. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Wiebe? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Wiebe. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Wiebe, okay. I want to make sure it's correct.
[CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Correct. [CONFIRMATION]

DIANE JOHNSON: I'm going to take just a moment for (inaudible). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Oh, okay, just in case we don't know, but then you would know who we all were. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

DIANE JOHNSON: Then they know. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Sorry. [CONFIRMATION]

DIANE JOHNSON: We've got a mix-up with our pages. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Ms. Jensen might like to have known our names.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Let me be Lambert today, please. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Sorry. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LAMBERT: All right. [CONFIRMATION]

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Mr. Wiebe, this is also a reappointment for you, I believe, for another term. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Yes, Senator Campbell, it is. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: So tell us a little bit about your first term and some issues that you see on the board. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Would you like me to present my name for the record or...?
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Oh, yes, I'm sorry. Yes, the clerk would probably appreciate it.
[CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: My name is Scott C. Wiebe, spelling the first name S-c-o-t-t, middle initial C, spelling the last name W-i-e-b-e. And back to your question, Senator Campbell, I would agree with Ms. Jensen in the fact that much like I can imagine that a new senator would experience the fact that the learning curve is steep, I believe that our particular board regulates the licenses of about 8,000 prehospital providers, so there is a lot of work to do. I would say that one of the most compelling issues that's currently facing the state is not only volunteer recruitment and retention. Our profession is unique in the fact that we rely on a large volunteer contingent to provide services in the outstate and frontier areas. And I guess one of the things that I have learned--and this is of particular interest, probably, of you--is that it's my understanding that there is not one particular agency or governmental body that is responsible for the provision of emergency medical services. And what that means to me as a board member is that when you have a diminishing cadre of volunteers, that they can basically close up shop and leave a town without emergency medical services. I know that to forward some type or piece of legislation that would require either a township or a taxing authority to be responsible for the provision of EMS, I think, is a task that would be worthy of the state of Nebraska, so that we can ensure that people not only in metropolitan or urban areas, but also in outstate can be afforded the same benefits of emergency medical services.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: You've had, also, a very long career in EMS and are with the Lincoln Fire and Rescue. Do you serve any of the small communities around here, Mr. Wiebe? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Pardon me? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Do you serve on any of the fire districts in a small community around here? [CONFIRMATION]

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

SCOTT WIEBE: No, I do not. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Because some of our Lincoln firefighters do.
[CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Correct, and that's certainly a benefit to a lot of those small communities. I'm quite familiar with Southwest Fire and Rescue, which serves the southwestern area of Lincoln and Lancaster County, and we have a very good working relationship with them. In fact, a lot of our protocols mirror each other and basically, when they're off duty from Lincoln Fire and Rescue, many of our responders--Waverly, Southwest Fire and Rescue, Raymond Fire and Rescue--a lot of those entities have the benefit of having Lincoln firefighters on their agencies. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Exactly. Questions from the senators? Senator Krist?
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Would you envision...you suggested some legislation. Would you envision that that would charge the village, city of the whatever class, all the way up, with the responsibility of maintaining a minimum EMS level by law? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Well, I'm not sure, Senator Krist, that we could legislate what level, but I think there needs to be some provision that a minimum standard exist within the state because the only...I mean there would be a lot of troubled waters to navigate through. For instance right now there's overlapping boundaries between taxing jurisdictions. So let's just take three outstate communities. A lot of those have ended up pooling their resources and stuff like that so that they can provide at least a minimum level of service. Now, I'm not sure what the exact reason is, but as some of the volunteers that we often recognize, their careers come to a close, 30/40/50 years of service to their communities, those are hard folks to replace. So in turn, as we diminish our cadre of volunteers, they could essentially close up shop. But yes, I believe it is important because EMS services have changed. We are now the frontline of healthcare for a lot of the uninsured or underinsured clients. And I work in a metropolitan area, and we see a lot of things. When people don't have anybody else to turn to, they turn to 911. Not only is it emergent services that occur in these small communities, we have what's called critical access hospitals, which I'm sure many of you are familiar with. But critical access hospitals provide essential services to the rural and frontier areas. But then, those patients have to be transferred, perhaps, to a tertiary care center. So not only do we have the one component where whatever happens out on the street, on the football field, you're in a car accident, you fall off your horse, you get to your critical access hospital. There is a provision of EMS that does that. But then there's a separate tier that we're working with at the board right now of: How do we reasonably get those patients to a tertiary care center with the appropriate level of transport? So I think it is important that at some point, the discussion at least occurs amongst the legislative body that who

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

is ultimately going to be responsible for the provision of EMS and how do we ensure that for the citizens, no matter where you are in the state of Nebraska, that you have a reasonable level of service? It's never going to be equal, we understand that; but I think it is reasonable to consider that you have an adequate level of service. And if an adequate level of service is a 20-minute response time because your county encompasses, I don't know, 80 or 100 square miles, maybe that is an adequate level of service. But I think that that's discussion that at some point needs to occur.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Well, I'm pretty much not busy next year with legislative action, so come talk to me, I'm...or that's interesting, it really is interesting. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: It is very interesting. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: And I think that the board has had that discussion that, you know, we always put in the legislative update and things like that, but I will take that to heart and we can have that discussion... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: ...and have some meaningful discussion about how we could at least start talking about that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KRIST: Thanks for your service. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: We always try to emphasize to the appointees that come that we much appreciate your coming to see us, but we also are here and want to hear from you throughout the year. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Sure. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And as the board talks about issues, it's particularly helpful to us to know if you do have issues that you think the Legislature needs to look at. Thought that was an excellent question on the part of Senator Krist and our willingness to be involved, so appreciate that. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Are there any other questions? Thank you for your long service. And I noticed in here that you have a Fire Department Medal of Valor. Was that with a particular accident? [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: It was actually, that was probably early on in my career with Lincoln

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

Health and Human Services Committee
March 20, 2012

Fire and Rescue. We were dispatched to a group home that was on fire and effected a rescue under extremely hazardous conditions without a hose line to protect us and were actually successful in rescuing a client from that structure. And he actually did quite well, so it was nice to be recognized in that fact. We always like to say it's doing our job; but still, it is nice to be recognized in that fact. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: Well, Captain, we much appreciate that and your service on the commission; and please let us know of your ideas. Senator Krist will be glad to visit with anyone, as would any of the senators here. So thank you for coming today. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: Thank you, Senator Campbell, we thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: All right, we have no other business for our appointees, so you are free to go. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: All right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: And I'm sure you will be notified when the Legislature takes final action, so thank you for coming. [CONFIRMATION]

SCOTT WIEBE: All right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR CAMPBELL: We realize...(recording ends). [CONFIRMATION]