

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

Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee  
February 26, 2014

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Government, Military and Veterans Affairs met at 8:45 a.m. on Wednesday, February 26, 2014, in Room 1507 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Bill Avery, Chairperson; Dave Bloomfield; Tommy Garrett; Russ Karpisek; Jim Scheer; and Norm Wallman. Senators absent: Scott Lautenbaugh; and John Murante, Vice Chairperson.

SENATOR AVERY: (Recorder malfunction)...to the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I call to order this meeting for the purpose of considering a nomination, reappointment by the Governor of Larry Johnson to the State Emergency Response Commission. Mr. Johnson, come forward, please. In case you don't know everybody, this is Senator Tommy Garrett over here who is... [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: (Exhibit 1) Good morning, Senator Garrett. Senator Bloomfield, how are you today? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Good. How are you? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Do you know most of the rest of us? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I think...Senator Scheer, I think I haven't met you yet but nice to meet you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHEER: Well, like I said, I withdrew my "no" vote. I had voted just before you walked in, so. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHEER: I'm from Norfolk, by the way. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Senator Garrett is our newest member. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Good morning. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: And I think probably this is all we're going to get today. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KARPISEK: Well, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR AVERY: All right, Mr. Johnson, tell us a little bit about your background and your previous service on the SERC and a little bit about what SERC does and your role on the board and why you want to serve again. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Sounds good. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Thank you very much, Senator Avery. I've worked in transportation nearly all my career. I currently represent the Nebraska Trucking Association. On the SERC, I represent trucking. And as you all may know, the State Emergency Response Commission is the planning and prevention of hazardous material releases or kind of tragedies like that that were brought around about Bhopal, that chemical release. We are a group of people, I guess, that have expertise in different areas that might be needed in the event of a disaster. We oversee many of the...well, all of the local emergency planning councils across the state and help provide guidance in a structure that, again, in the event of some kind of a disaster that we would be prepared and have resources and connections on helping to help mitigate a larger disaster. I've been on the commission for, I think, this is my third term. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Third term? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Yeah, I think. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay. And what do you do? You said you're in trucking now? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I'm the president of the trucking association, the Nebraska Trucking Association. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: And is that your full-time employment? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Yes, uh-huh. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay. What do you do in regard to being president of the trucking association? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: We're the trade and lobby group for the trucking industry so I lead up a staff of about eight people now. We publish a monthly magazine and watch over the concerns for the trucking industry, making sure that our taxes go into helping improve the infrastructure and also keeping the highway safe and moving the goods. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR SCHEER: Well, you just keep moving trucks up, it'd be (inaudible).  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Careful. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Do you ever lobby? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I do. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Yes, I am a registered lobbyist and currently represent the trucking industry on their behalf. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Okay. Questions from the committee? Senator Bloomfield.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: How familiar are you with--this is way off of this line--with the new CDL requirements coming down the line? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Very familiar. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Body mass index and all that good stuff? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Yes, uh-huh. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: We need to visit. I'm a retired truck driver.  
[CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I understand. Of course, our concerns always are helping, not only to keep our workers safe and healthy, but I'm sure (recorder malfunction) got qualified drivers behind the wheels which is really a difficult thing right now. We do have a large shortage as we continue to see the economy grow and fewer people wanting to get into professions like trucking or even pilots today are tough to find, so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: If what my doctor tells me is coming down the road on CDLs, there's going to be a lot bigger deficit of drivers. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: It'll take about a third of them off the road.  
[CONFIRMATION]

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LARRY JOHNSON: It will be a concern. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Well, three terms on the SERC, huh? [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I believe so, yes, since, I think, 2004. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Been a long time. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Well, this will be the start of my third one, I think.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah. Ordinarily, at this time we would entertain comments from the audience. Since there is no audience... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHEER: I guess Judy (phonetic) doesn't want to testify. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: ...thank you very much for coming down. I'm sorry that you had to come all the way from Omaha for about five minutes of testimony. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Well, that's not a problem at all. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: This is not unusual for these nominations not to generate a lot of public interest and it's not unusual for them to take only about five minutes.  
[CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I understand. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: What we will do next is have a brief Executive Session to vote on your nomination. And then if we approve it, it will go before the Legislature for a discussion and vote. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Thank you very much and thank you for making special arrangements for me to get down and...on top of that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Yeah, we don't usually do this at 8:45. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I understand. And I know you have a lot of work to do, so.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR AVERY: Anyway, thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR AVERY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

LARRY JOHNSON: I appreciate everybody's help. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]