

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

Transportation and Telecommunications Committee  
May 28, 2013

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Transportation and Telecommunications met at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 2013, in Room 1113 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Annette Dubas, Chairperson; Jim Smith, Vice Chairperson; Lydia Brasch; Galen Hadley; Beau McCoy; Scott Price; and Dan Watermeier. Senators absent: Charlie Janssen. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: We will go ahead and call this hearing to order out of respect for everybody's time and getting things moving. So I'll go through just a few little housekeeping duties, and then we'll move on with the hearing. I'll go ahead and introduce the committee. To my far right is Senator Dan Watermeier from Syracuse. Then we have Senator Jim Smith, Vice Chair of the Committee, from Papillion. Joselyn Luedtke is the legal counsel for the committee. I am Senator Annette Dubas. To my immediate left is Anne Hajek; she is the committee clerk. She keeps a recording of everything that's going on. And we have Senator Galen Hadley from Kearney, Senator Beau McCoy from Omaha, and Senator Lydia Brasch from Bancroft. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Matthew will be right back. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Yes, and we do have a page so if there is...happen to be anything that you need, we have Matthew Mogensen, just coming in the door there. He is from South Sioux City. He is a senior, now a senior at UNL. So we thank him for helping us out today. We just have this one issue on our agenda is a confirmation hearing. And you filled out your green sheet, very good. Matthew will pick that up for you and give it to Anne. And then I'll just ask you to state and spell your name for the record and give us a little bit of background about yourself, and let's see...is this a new appointment or reappointment? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: This is a new one. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Okay. All right. And then just maybe tell us about what you may bring to the board. So go ahead and state and spell your name and introduce yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Okay, my name is William or Bill, William, W-i-l-l-i-a-m, Ashburn, A-s-h-b-u-r-n, and I'm from Lincoln; born and raised in Hastings, Nebraska; graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan. And then started my almost 36-year career in the communications business, starting with the Lincoln Telephone Company through Alltel and through Verizon. I actually retired from Verizon in November of '09. Obviously, when you have acquisitions like that, things change and so forth like that, and I didn't really want to leave the great state of Nebraska. So I decided to retire. Throughout my

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career I've done a number of different things: accounting, internal auditing, marketing, sales and operations, and I've also done a couple different stints in regulatory work. And that was both in the wireless and wire-line business. I finished up my career with Alltel, basically, in the wireless business. Did a lot of regulatory work early on in my career with the Nebraska Public Service Commission. That was back when, really, there was just one phone system, if you will. And enjoyed that kind of work, enjoyed the regulatory work. Fred Stone, who had this position that was just term limited out, I was talking to him, oh, several months ago, and he was telling me he was coming off this board and that I should apply. So I did a little research at it, looked at it and, basically, filled out an application, and here I am. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Done a little bit of research on what the board does, looked at the various laws, and I think it will be very educational and interesting for me. And it's another way for me to give back to the state of Nebraska, if you will. So... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Well, thank you and thank you for that. I mean we certainly have found with the appointments that have come before this committee and other committees we serve on, it seems like everybody has such a willingness to give back. I guess that's what makes Nebraska the state that it is...great state that it is. So we do appreciate your willingness to take on this additional duty. Are there questions from the committee? Senator Brasch. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And I wanted to thank you for your willingness to serve and your interest. And your capacity and qualifications are very impressive. Is there something that you have envisioned...a change, something you would like accomplish on this board or what you...if you can be a catalyst of something? If you had to pick one, what would it...what direction would that be? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, I think that's a good question. In looking at some of the various state laws and regulations, I'd like to really kind of learn more about really the car business and how they do certain things. And probably not going to give you a great answer, but, you know, I think it's...it's...there is...it's an interest to me, and I think I can learn some stuff. And with my background I think I could provide some guidance, if you will, to that board. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Very good. That's a good answer. And a little bit on the lighter side, I see you have...we're farmers, a lot of farmers in our district, and one of the crops you have is a lollipop farm? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, that's a...actually it's a business... [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR BRASCH: It's a lighter, yeah... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: It's a building. It's a commercial building. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Yes, I thought that was a good name, a Lollipop Farm.  
[CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, actually it was a day care/preschool center that my wife started a number of years ago. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Oh. Those are very needed and resourceful. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Yes, they are. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: I like the name. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Just...but very creative. So, thank you again for serving and look forward to seeing your activity and accomplishments on the board. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BRASCH: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Other questions? Senator Hadley. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HADLEY: Thank you, Chairman Dubas. Mr. Ashburn, I just thought I would tell you, the last applicant we had a few weeks ago that had Barry Kennedy and Loy Todd as their references did not make it out the door before their application was killed. So I just thought I would tell you that. (Laughter) So don't feel that we're picking on you if that happens. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, I hope I can get out of here. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HADLEY: That's all. I appreciate your willingness to serve on the board, and it is a good board, and we have had a couple of people, and I think it's...the thing I remember that they were reappointments, and they made an interesting comment that they met when they had something to do, which I think is a... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Right. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR HADLEY: ...is not all bad for government boards to meet when they have something to do. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Yep. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Other questions? I know many of our boards and commissions try to get a good mixture of people represent a diversity of areas. Are you coming in under any particular umbrella of representing a particular interest? [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: This is a public sector board member. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: So, you know, just what caught your interest in...you stated you felt you would be able to learn things from...are there any other experiences that you thought, you know, I think I could bring something to the Motor Vehicle Licensing Board or just... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Well, again I've been...I purchased a car not too long ago, and I actually know the dealer and visited with him and how that business works and those kind of things. And my interest is, again, is probably more about educating myself in that industry. And then with my background in the regulatory and understanding rules and regulations and operations a little bit, I think I can perhaps help a little bit if need be. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: Very good. I think that public sector interest is very important because you do bring that other viewpoint outside of the industry, but it's that industry that serves the public. So I think you'll be a great addition to this board. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: This is Senator Price who just joined us. And we are just wrapping up. I don't know if you have any prepared questions? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR PRICE: No, I read over the material provided and very impressed. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: All right. Very good. Any other questions? Well, seeing none, we'll let you go back and sit down. I don't see anybody else in here in the room to come in and testify either for you... [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: For or against. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: ...against you or in the neutral capacity. [CONFIRMATION]

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WILLIAM ASHBURN: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: So with that we will probably close the hearing, and we're going to go into an Executive Session and make a decision right now. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: So if you would want to wait outside. [CONFIRMATION]

WILLIAM ASHBURN: Okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR WATERMEIER: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR DUBAS: We thank you for coming in today. [CONFIRMATION]