

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

Transportation and Telecommunications Committee  
March 09, 2017

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Transportation and Telecommunications met at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 9, 2017, in Room 2021 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on three gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Curt Friesen, Chairperson; Jim Smith, Vice Chairperson; Bruce Bostelman; Tom Briese; Suzanne Geist; Dan Hughes; and John Murante. Senators absent: Mike Hilgers.

SENATOR FRIESEN: Okay, welcome to the Telecommunications and...Transportation and Telecommunications Committee hearing. I am Curt Friesen, District 34, from Henderson. And I'll have a few procedural items. We don't look like we have a large audience, so I am going to just say, you know, no cell phones; please turn them quiet. And those wishing to testify, fill out a green sheet and hand it to any one of our staff here, whoever is on hand. When you begin your testimony or when you come to talk, be sure to state and spell your name. We're not going to use the lights today. Committee members...on my right is Senator Tom Briese; he's from Albion, District 41. Senator Bruce Bostelman is next to him, from District 23, from Brainard. And we have Senator John Murante from Gretna, representing District 49. And joining me here will be Senator Smith, next to me, if...from District 41--14, from Papillion; and Elice Hubbert, the committee clerk. And then we have Senator Dan Hughes from Venango, representing District 44. And next to him would be Senator Mike Hilgers from Lincoln, representing District 21. And then we have Suzanne--Senator Sam (sic--Suzanne) Geist, representing District 25. With that, we will open the confirmation hearing on Daniel Spray. Welcome, Mr. Spray. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Hello. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: So if you'd just kind of tell us a little bit about yourself and your interest in why you'd want to serve on the committee, and whether or not you're a new appointee or a current member. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Tell us a little bit about yourself. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: (Exhibit 1) All right; I appreciate it. My name is Daniel Spray. The only one that calls me Daniel is my mom now, so I go by Dan. A little bit about me...I am currently serving; I was appointed back in May and missed the cutoff. And so this is the confirmaton hearing. So just this morning, I attended my third meeting. I am really enjoying it. I grew up in Clay Center, very near Henderson, obviously, and came from a very rural community, very

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small. I moved away after high school, moved to Norfolk and never left. So I have my roots in rural, very rural, and have a real passion for that. And it's really built my business around that. And I've been with Connecting Point--or Precision Technology is what we are now--for going on 21 years, and purchased the business 10 years ago now in May. At that time, we had relatively...I mean it was a strong business but relatively small. And we've really...we've grown the business significantly. We have three offices now and base them...have really built our business around rural communities. We're an internet provider and so we actually cover about 200 miles north to south and east to west with fixed-base wireless and we offer services, not only in Nebraska, but lots of other states and outlying areas as well. And so I feel like I can really bring a lot of good to the NITC because I have a wide breadth of knowledge for technology as a whole. But, not only right here in Norfolk or in Nebraska even, we were...we have customers in 12 countries that we deal with on a daily basis. And so it's a wide breadth of knowledge in lots of different types of technologies, and I think that's one of my strong suits. And additionally, I like problems. A lot of people don't say that, but I like problems because I like finding solutions to them. I enjoy troubleshooting, and so that's always been, I think, a big passion of mine. So...  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Okay. Any questions from the committee? I see that you have recommendations from former Speaker Flood and from current Speaker Jim Scheer. You think that would help you (laughter)? [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Both are good friends of mine actually. Yeah, I... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MURANTE: Who do you think was the better Speaker (laughter)?  
[CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: What's that? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MURANTE: Who do you think was the better Speaker? [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: You know I...I joked...and actually I had lunch with Mike yesterday and told him we needed to get him and Speaker Scheer in the same room and have a speak-off, just to see what happens then (laughter). So... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MURANTE: Let's set that up as soon as we can. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: I will see what I can do there. [CONFIRMATION:]

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SENATOR FRIESEN: Any other...any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Spray. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: And we will..is anybody here to testify in favor of Daniel Spray confirmation? Seeing none, is there anybody who wish to testify in opposition? I see none. And I'll ask for anybody who wants to testify in a neutral capacity. Seeing none, thank you, Mr... [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: You don't let him talk (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Thank you, Mr. Spray. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BOSTELMAN: He comes up next (laughter). [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: My turn. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Next we'll have Shane... [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: Yeah, that's right. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Shane Greckel. [CONFIRMATION]

DANIEL SPRAY: See what happens, what you get for not asking for directions. [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Welcome. Welcome, Mr. Greckel. [CONFIRMATION]

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SHANE GRECKEL: (Exhibit 1) Thank you, committee members, Chairman Friesen. My name is Shane Greckel, S-h-a-n-e G-r-e-c-k-e-l, for the record. This will be my first appointment to where it needs legislative confirmation. Very happy to be part of the NITC council, as well. A little bit about my background...this is what I went to college for is computer programming, actually, and built a small computer business around that to put myself through college, and since then did a little service work. But primarily, my heart is in agriculture. I am a sixth-generation farmer, and that's where I intend to stay. And that's primarily why I want to be on this council; that's primarily my reason. And my focus for it is to bring that technology of twenty-first century agriculture, to marry that in with what we have, for a great broadband system for great telecommunications in this state, that everyone has worked so hard for. And quickly, I just want to share the comment that we...I was speaking with before of autonomous tractors. One is disking in the field and planting in the field side by side with another user/operator. This is a tremendous feat that I think Nebraskan operators can look forward to. And again, I want to use my experience, my expertise, to help the committee, to help this council get out in front of these issues so we have this ability, so we have the infrastructure to support modern agriculture, we have the ability to support these modern feats that no one else can compete with us.  
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Thank you, Mr. Greckel. Any questions from the committee? Senator Hughes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Thank you for coming today. How often does the Nebraska Information Technology Commission get together and meet? [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: Usually quarterly. I believe it's four times a year. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay. And how...I mean is it just come in for a day meeting or just...and what kind of staff is involved? [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: The meeting itself usually--the ones that I have attended--usually two to three hours midmorning and then afternoon, if there's a session, is follow-up. The staff is...there's a couple staff members on there that really help out getting everything lined up. But the depth and breadth of this commission is quite extensive. I mean it really can reach out and grab a lot of things from telehealth, telemedicine, all the way to the education committees. And again, I would like to put agriculture in, actually, this as a side note to make sure that that area is well represented, too. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR HUGHES: Okay, thank you. Thank you for coming today. [CONFIRMATION]

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SHANE GRECKEL: Um-hum, yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Thank you, Senator Hughes. Any other questions from the committee? I was...served with you at least for one of the meetings or maybe two. I don't remember how many you were at before we were able to confirm you. But you know, Senator Bruce Bostelman will be on there next. And you know, the Transportation Committee is obviously--telecommunications is part of it--is wanting to focus on broadband expansion down the road. So I think working with the NITC Committee and we can, you know, maybe work together... [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: Absolutely. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: ...to make sure that expansion happens in an orderly fashion, so... [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: You bet. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Seeing no questions, thank you, Mr. Greckel. Do we have anyone who wishes to testify in favor of the confirmation of Shane Greckel? Seeing no one, does anyone wish to testify in opposition? See anyone coming forward (laughter)? Anyone wish to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing no one, thank you, Mr. Greckel. [CONFIRMATION]

SHANE GRECKEL: Thank you, committee members. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: And look forward to having you on the committee. Our next confirmation would be Stephan Budke... [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHAN BUDKE: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: ...if I've pronounced it correctly. [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHAN BUDKE: Yes, you did. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHAN BUDKE: (Exhibit 1) Thank you. My name is Stephan Budke. It's spelled S-t-e-p-h-a-n; last name is Budke, B-u-d-k-e. I am from North Platte, Nebraska. And I have been nominated

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or, actually, I am actually serving on the Motor Vehicle Dealer Licensing Board (sic--Motor Vehicle Industry Licensing Board) at this time and here today for the confirmation.

[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: Can you give a little bit of the history? Have you served on the board before? Or... [CONFIRMATION]

STEPHAN BUDKE: Yes, I have. I served approximately nine years ago. The term ended; I was there for about seven years. I fulfilled a term for a person who had deceased, and then I served two three-year terms. The board is made up of consumer advocates, dealers from the RV industry, the truck industry, and the automobile industry and the motorcycle industry. This term I am representing the motorcycle dealership industry. I own a Harley-Davidson dealership and a...and a multiline motorcycle dealership in North Platte, Nebraska. And today I have my wife, Irma, and my daughter, who we pulled out of school for a good civics lesson (laughter). And so...and I wanted them to see the Capitol. Of course we went on a beautiful tour here two years ago. I studied for my graduate degree at UNO--my undergrad, my graduate degree at the University of Michigan. We've been...my wife and I have been in the business for about 20 years, and we employ approximately 20 people to 22 people at the peak of the season. And we serve a radius all the way from Valentine to Chadron into Colorado, northwestern Kansas and then east into the Grand Island area. So we have a big radius on our...on our market area. I think some of the things I can bring to the board is...the board's, basically, mission in, from what I understand it to be in today's world, is to make sure we have reputable manufacturers that are selling their wares in the state of Nebraska so our consumers and the dealers can get the products in a good fashion and that they're warrantable and parts are available and that type of thing, also that the dealers are representing their transactions and services to the consumers in a fair and equitable manner. And so whether we're checking the bonding or the licensing of salespeople and/or of the sales license for the dealership and all, so it's kind of a three-way thing, the relationship between the dealer and the manufacturers and the consumer with the dealers. So I think I have a very good background on some of that relationship with the consumers. I think I am pretty strong in that thing. I served on the National Advisory Board for American Honda for a three-year period. And so I got a really good perspective of manufacturers and vendors and how they think and how they like to market their products and how they like to be a good civic partner in the state of Nebraska. And I think we kind of miss out with General Motors and Ford and IH. I really believe we...I don't know where this would come from, but how they can...they can do some things to represent their products and their services in the state of Nebraska in a positive fashion, but what they can give back to our state. And you see this happening in other...other areas of the United States. You'll see these manufacturers hold events, try out new technologies, and at very low cost. And I am kind of interested, if we have the ability to kind of look at some of that stuff in the future, so. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR FRIESEN: (Exhibit 2) Thank you, Mr. Budke. Any questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you for your willingness to serve. And is there anyone who wishes to testify in favor? We have a letter of support from William Jackson, executive director of the Motor Vehicle Licensing Board (sic). Is there anyone who wishes to testify in opposition? Seeing none, is there anyone who wishes to testify in a neutral capacity? Seeing none, good luck.  
[CONFIRMATION]

STEPHAN BUDKE: Thank you, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR FRIESEN: That will close the hearing on Stephan Budke. And now we'll close the hearing. [CONFIRMATION]