

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**FOLEY:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber for the first day of the One Hundred Seventh Legislature, First Session. Our chaplain for today is Senator Williams. Please rise.

**WILLIAMS:** A special welcome to our senators that are already seated in the body and a special welcome to some familiar faces that have been reelected to come back and serve their constituents, along with a group of senators that are recognizing their first day in this Chamber. What a special day. January 6 is not only the first day of this session, but it also marks Epiphany for those of us that follow the Christian calendar. And I would suggest that Epiphany means more than just a special day to take down your Christmas decorations. Today is a day that I would hope that we can open our minds to new ideas, open our hearts to new friendships, and open ourselves to new beginnings. With the spirit of Epiphany, would you please join me in prayer. Dear Lord, we thank you for today and we thank you for all days. Please bring an epiphany to each one of us. Let something simple or striking bring on a new discovery for new solutions. Help us to recognize the importance of people in our success, building relationships, finding commonality and working together will help each of us achieve success. Help us to conduct ourselves with a sense of responsibility. We don't make decisions because they're easy. We don't make decisions because they're popular. We simply make decisions because they're right. Lord, please help us to strive to reach our potential, keep us focused on the larger goals for Nebraska rather than any individual goals or aspirations. We thank you for the many talents and gifts you have entrusted in us. Help us to use these talents and gifts when making public policy for our state. We ask for your guidance and strength, not only for the senators, but for all the staff, their families, and the many other support people that serve our state. Please keep us safe. Let us use our combined wisdom, our independent imagination and our abundant compassion to find opportunities in the obstacles we face and solutions for the challenges on the horizon. With your help, Lord, the Epiphany begins today. Amen.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Williams. Before proceeding, Senator Kolterman would like us to recognize Dr. Patrick Hotovy of York, Nebraska, for serving today as family physician of the day. Dr. Hotovy is with us under the north balcony. Doctor, if you could please rise, we would like to thank you and welcome you to the Nebraska Legislature. We will now have the Presentation of the Colors from the Nebraska State Patrol Headquarters Troop Honor Guard. Thank you to the

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Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Nebraska State Patrol Headquarters Troop Honor Guard. Please be seated. Pursuant to the provisions of Article III, Section 10 of the Constitution of Nebraska, the One Hundred Seventh Legislature, First Session of the Legislature of Nebraska assembled in the George W. Norris Legislative Chamber of the State Capitol at the hour of 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, is now called to order. Mr. Clerk, will you please call the roll for purposes of establishing a quorum. Members, when you hear your name announced, please announce your presence. Mr. Clerk.

**CLERK:** Yes, Mr. President, thank you. Members, please when you hear your name, announce present or here. And please remember the Plexiglas dulls sound so speak loudly. I'd appreciate it. Senator-elect Ray Aguilar. Present. Senator Joni Albrecht. Present. Senator John Arch. Present. Senator Carol Blood. Present. Senator-elect Eliot Bostar. Present. Senator Bruce Bostelman. Present. Senator Tom Brandt. Present. Senator Tom Brewer. Present. Senator Tom Briese. Present. Senator-elect John Cavanaugh. Present. Senator Machaela Cavanaugh. Present. Senator Robert Clements. Present. Senator-elect Jen Day. Present. Senator Wendy DeBoer. Present. Senator Myron Dorn. Present. Senator Steve Erdman. Present. Senator-elect Mike Flood. Present. Senator Curt Friesen. Present. Senator Suzanne Geist. Present. Senator Tom-- Tim, excuse me, Gragert. Present. Senator Mike Groene. Present. Senator Steve Halloran. Present. Senator Ben Hansen. Present. Senator Matt Hansen. Present. Senator Mike Hilgers. Present. Senator Robert Hilkemann. Present. Senator Dan Hughes. Present. Senator Megan Hunt. Present. Senator Mark Kolterman. Present. Senator Steve Lathrop. Present. Senator Brett Lindstrom. Present. Senator Lou Ann Linehan. Present. Senator John Lowe. Present. Senator John McCollister. Present. Senator Mike McDonnell. Present. Senator-elect Terrell McKinney. Present. Senator Adam Morfeld. Present. Senator Mike Moser. Present. Senator Dave Murman. Present. Senator-elect Rich Pahls. Present. Senator Patty Pansing Brooks. Present. Senator-elect Rita Sanders. Present. Senator Julie Slama. Present. Senator John Stinner. Present. Senator Tony Vargas. Present. Senator Lynne Walz. Present. Senator Justin Wayne. Present. Senator Matt Williams. Present. Senator Anna Wishart. Mr. President, I have a quorum present.

**FOLEY:** A quorum is present. Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Now to proceed to the appointment of temporary officers, Chair recognizes Senator Brandt.

**BRANDT:** Mr. President, I move to appoint Mr. Patrick J. O'Donnell as temporary Clerk of the Legislature and Mr. Doug Donscheski as temporary Sergeant at Arms.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Brandt. The motion before you is the appointment of temporary officers. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Mr. Clerk, we'll proceed to resignation and appointment letters. Mr. Clerk.

**CLERK:** I have none, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Chair recognizes Senator Hughes for a motion.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that we proceed to the election of five persons to serve as the Committee on Credentials who will forthwith report to the Legislature on the credentials of those claiming to be elected to the Legislature in the general election November 2020.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hughes. Members, the question is the adoption of the motion to elect a Committee on Credentials. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. The Chair recognizes Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to elect the following five members of the Legislature to serve on the Committee on Credentials: Senators Friesen, Pansing Brooks, Matt Williams, Matt Hansen, and myself, Senator Hughes.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hughes. The five members are Senator Friesen, Senator Patty Pansing Brooks, Senator Williams, Senator Hughes, and Senator Hansen. The motion before you is to elect those five members. All those-- are there any further nominations? All those in favor of the five so named say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Would those five members of the committee come forward to the Clerk's podium, please. Senator Erdman, you're recognized for a motion.

**ERDMAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to approve the Committee on Credentials report as certified and presented by the Secretary of State.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Erdman. The motion before you is to adopt the report of the Committee on Credentials. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The report is adopted. Chair recognizes Senator Blood for a motion.

**BLOOD:** Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President, I move that a committee of five be appointed to escort the Chief Justice of the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Supreme Court to the Legislative Chamber for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the members of the Legislature.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Blood. The motion before your is to select a committee of five to escort the Chief Justice. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. I hereby announce the following five members to serve as that escort committee: Senator Hilgers, Senator Lathrop, Senator Pansing Brooks, Senator Geist, and Senator Stinner. Would those five members please retire to the Clerk of the Supreme Court's Office for the purposes of escorting the Chief Justice to the Chamber to administer the oath.

**CLERK:** Members, when the Chief Justice arrives to administer the oath, he will call you by name. We are going to ask you to remain at your seats as opposed to come to the well. So when you're, when you're called by the name by the Chief Justice, please rise near your seat. And that's where the oath will be administered. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** The Chair recognizes the Sergeant at Arms.

**SERGEANT AT ARMS:** Mr. President, your committee is now escorting the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the great state of Nebraska, Mike Heavican.

**FOLEY:** Members, please be seated. The Chair recognizes the Chief Justice of the Nebraska Supreme Court, the Honorable Mike Heavican.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I am here to swear in newly elected and reelected senators, so I will call your names and when I do call your name, normally we would have you come down to the front, but we're not going to do that this year. Please stand in your cubicle and remain standing until I call all of the names, then I will read the oath and ask you to respond I swear or I affirm. Raymond Aguilar, Joni Albrecht, Carol Blood, Eliot Bostar, Bruce Bostelman, Tom Brewer, Tom Briese, John Cavanaugh, Jr., Jen Day, Steve Erdman, Mike Flood, Suzanne Geist, Steve Halloran, Mike Hilgers, Lou Ann Linehan, John S. Lowe, Sr., Mike McDonnell, Terrell M. McKinney, Rich Pahls, Rita Sanders, Julie Slama, Tony Vargas, Lynne Walz, Justin T. Wayne, and Anna Wishart. Anybody whose name I didn't call who thinks they should be sworn in? Hearing no names, please, each of you raise your right hand. Do each of you solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Nebraska and will faithfully discharge the duties of senator according to the best of your ability, and that at the election at which you were chosen to fill said office, you have not improperly influenced in any way the vote of any elector and have not accepted,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

nor will you accept or receive directly or indirectly any money or other valuable thing from any corporation, company or person or any promise of office for any official act or influence, for any vote you may give or withhold on any bill, resolution or appropriation? If so, please say I swear or I affirm. Thank you very much and congratulations. [APPLAUSE]

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. Would the escort committee please return to the front of the Chamber for purposes of escorting the Chief Justice, please. The Chair recognizes Senator Lathrop.

**LATHROP:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that the rules, as now in our possession, be adopted for today only, Wednesday, January 6, 2021.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Lathrop. The motion before you is the adoption of the temporary rules. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The temporary rules are adopted. We now move to election of permanent officers. The Chair recognizes Senator Hilgers.

**HILGERS:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I move that the following officers recommended by the Executive Board be elected to serve for the One Hundred Seventh Legislature: Clerk of the Legislature, Patrick J. O'Donnell; Assistant Clerk of the Legislature, Richard K. Brown; Assistant Clerk of the Legislature, Brandon L. Metzler; and the Sergeant at Arms, Doug Donscheski.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hilgers. All those in favor of Senator Hilger's motion say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. We'll now proceed to the election of Speaker. The Chair recognizes Senator Kolterman for a motion.

**KOLTERMAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the Speaker of the Legislature.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Kolterman. The motion before you is to, is to move to the-- to proceed with the election of the Speaker. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Nominations are now open for the position of Speaker of the Legislature. Senator Hilgers, you're recognized.

**HILGERS:** Thank, thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. It's an honor to be here again with you. It's great to see so many familiar faces, old friends who I've served with over the last several years. And it's really an exciting day for me to be able to serve with so many new faces today. I think I saw Senator McKinney. Welcome to the Legislature, Senator Bostar, Senator Day, Senator Sanders. And a

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

very special welcome to Senator John Cavanaugh, the younger, who makes history today as one of two siblings for the first time to serve together in the Nebraska Legislature. So congratulations to your family and we welcome you to the Nebraska Legislature's family. And a very special welcome to a few senators who have been here before. It's not their first rodeo. Senator Aguilar, Senator Pahls, and Senator Mike Flood, one of many Mikes here in the body. Welcome back to the Legislature. I'm beyond excited to serve with the three of you and to see what we can do over the next two years together. Colleagues, I rise this morning to put my name into nomination and ask for your vote to be Speaker of the One Hundred Seventh Legislature. Now the rule says that when you're to do this, what you're supposed to do is tell the body what you may expect of me if I happen to be elected Speaker. Well-- and that's exactly what I will do in a minute. But I think there's a threshold question that should be asked, the answer to which I think gives context to my commitment to you if I'm elected Speaker. And that question is, what should Nebraska expect of us? What should Nebraska expect of the One Hundred Seventh Legislature? Because the truth is, colleagues, we face incredible challenges here. We are in the middle of a worldwide pandemic, a pandemic that has taken far too many lives of Nebraskans, that has led to economic devastation for family and businesses and disrupted industries. It has also taken away something that is fundamentally human, our ability to be around one another, the ability to attend a wedding, to go to dinner together, to socialize, to see our family, to see loved ones, to go to a football game, go to funerals. On top of that challenge, we have a lot of other challenges, some of which we know about. We know this year, for instance, we're going to approach a budget. We need to pass a budget. We need to make decisions as to the priorities of that budget. We also know we're going to talk about Corrections. But if you take a wider lens, there are a whole number of other challenges that face this Legislature, and I'll name just a few. How do we regrow and reignite greater Nebraska? How do we create better jobs and higher paying jobs in north Omaha? How do we make Nebraska a more attractive place for young people to stay and raise their family? And in the midst of all those challenges and others I didn't reference, we also are in a unique political environment, one that's changed over the last several years. The political discourse outside these walls doesn't tend to focus on policy, it tends on destroying people. Doesn't tend to focus on building up, it tends to focus on tearing down. It's not focused on thoughtful consideration of arguments, but reaction. So in the midst of all those challenges, what would Nebraskans expect of us? Well, I will tell you, I know that what they would expect of us is that we, we would meet those challenges head on. And I know that because that is what generations of leaders before us, generations of legislative

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

leaders have done before us. This isn't the first time there's been a pandemic. Previous generations went through two world wars, a Great Depression, a recession, natural disasters, floods, tornadoes. And not only did those generations meet the challenge, at times they did something even more inspiring. They raised their eye to the horizon and envisioned something that didn't previously exist and they made it reality. Think about a world in which there's no Lake McConaughy. Think about a world in which there's no Mahoney State Park, no Henry Doorly Zoo, no excellent network of public schools. Think about a world in which there's no, there's no worldwide-- industry leading-- world leading agricultural industry here in Nebraska that feeds the globe. All of those things came from leaders, not all in the body, many of whom were outside of the-- outside of around the state and outside of the Legislature who were committed to making a dream a reality. So I think that Nebraskans would not just expect of us that we meet these challenges, but I think they would expect of us that we do what previous generations have done and put our eye to the horizon and imagine something new and different. And you know what? They have every right to expect us to do that. We have everything we need to do that. This state is filled with amazing people, hardworking, empathetic, civic-oriented, community-minded people. This state has everything we need to be successful. We have everything we need to be successful here. I know we have 49 committed public servants who are not here for the money, who are here to make a difference for their community. And we have something else that no one else in any other state in this country has. We have a special tool that's been given to us by Nebraskans. And I got to tell you, they expect us to use it. And that is this place, it's the Unicameral. You know, if you look at the Nebraska Constitution, the very first branch of government that is formed that is listed is not the executive branch, it's not the judiciary, it's the Legislature. And there is a very good reason for that, colleagues. There is only one body in the state, only one in which the voices of Nebraskans from every corner of this state can be heard. Think about it. Each one of us have had thousands of personal interactions with people in our community, if not tens of thousands. We know their hopes. We know their dreams. We know their anxieties. We know where we can help them, where we should get out of the way. We know all of that. And here when this place works right, when this place works right, it's the only place you can get people from Venango talking about the people-- the concerns of people in north Omaha and putting those together in a way to create solutions that benefit the entire state. When this place works light-- right, there is nothing like it in the country. And there's another reason why this place is special. Unlike every other Legislature that I'm aware of in the country, this is not a place where just a couple people, majority

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

leader, minority whip, a few small, small set of leaders get to decide what bills are introduced, what gets amended, what gets passed. When this place works right, every single one of us, smallest legislative body in the country has a say and it makes a lot of sense to me, because that's the only way that the voices of each part of our communities will be heard here. So if it's true, and I think that it is, that Nebraskans expect us not just to tackle the challenges, not just to imagine a better future, but to use the tool that has been given to us. If that is what they expect of us, then I think that answers the question of what you should expect from me. Because if I'm elected as your Speaker, I will do everything I possibly can within my power to make sure this place runs right. Now there are a lot of ingredients that go into that and I'll touch on a few. One is process. In order to get the best out of us and the best out of this institution, we need to have a good process. And you can envision a whole number of ways that that process can break down. It could break down if you have rules that are applied arbitrarily, rules that are applied because of a person's personality, rules that are applied unfairly or inconsistently, inconsistently. When that happens, people withdraw from the process. They don't have trust in the process. They are cynical about the process. You cannot have as good a process as we want to have with that kind of an approach. If you have a process that encourages or incentivizes ambushes or legislative surprises, that breeds distrust, it tears away from the fabric between senators. And I'll tell you, if you have a process that doesn't allow, doesn't fully allow one of the most powerful tools that we have as a body, the ability to debate on the floor, if you don't have a process that fully allows that then you are not using this tool at its best. Because if we're cutting off debate, then you can't hear the voices of Valentine. You can't hear the voices of Columbus. You can't hear the voice of northwest Lincoln where I represent. So those are part of the process and how the process can break down. So I commit to you that I will do everything in my power to have a strong process. I will be fair. I will apply rules equally. Similar situations are treated the same. Doesn't matter who you are, it is the situation. I will do everything in my power to eliminate surprises, everything in my power to provide fair notice. And I will tell you colleagues, if I am elected Speaker, we will have full and fair debate. We will have the opportunity to work through the issues on the floor. You have my commitment. Now the other part of this is not just process, it's culture. And here are just a few things I want to say. The first is it is undoubtedly true, I think, that term limits has impacted this place. The institutional knowledge, the culture from the past has-- if it's not gone, it's seriously eroded. And I view anything that might be lost also as an opportunity to create something new. And so you have my commitment



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Floor Debate January 6, 2021

over the next two years to do my part in creating a culture, not just for the One Hundred Seventh Legislature, not one that meets just the needs of today, but one that we intentionally work to pass down from the next generation of legislatures-- legislators. So that when we are gone, this culture will endure. Now there's a few elements that I personally commit to, and I expect-- I think the body will rise to the occasion on these things as well. But I control what I can control, and that's me. The first is I, I will never personalize a dispute. I haven't done it in four years. I'm not going to do in the next two years. When we're down here, there might be sharp elbows when we're talking issues. And that's what you will get from me. And I guarantee there's going to be times where I get knocked down, there's going to be an issue, and this is going to happen all of us, there's going to be an issue where I lose. There are going to be multiple issues where I lose. And you have my commitment, no matter how hard that debate is, the very next issue, I'm going to dust off my jeans and get right back up and work with whoever it is I need to work with on the next issue, no matter if they're on the other side. You have my commitment. You also have my commitment to do something that I think is foundational to a good process with a group like ours, which is build relationships through listening. Any strong relationship requires good communication. And it requires, I think, above all, the ability to listen and understand the people with whom you're talking to. The best relationships, relationships in my life are the ones where I've gotten to know the other person deeply. Not because I want to talk at them or I just want them to agree with me, it's because I take the time to try to understand them. And that adds not just value to the process, because if they think that I'm truly listening and there's a level of trust, they will, they will be honest and candid with me and they'll be honest and candid with the body and let us know where we're going astray and they'll know they will be heard. And it makes me a better person. So I will listen. Might not always agree. You might not always be able to convince me, but I will do my very best to not only listen, but understand everyone's point of view. I also think a good Speaker needs to have humility and strength. I don't need any credit to be here. It is an honor of a lifetime to serve in this Legislature. I don't want any credit. It's-- the body deserves all the credit for the successes that we have. And you can point any failures at me. But ultimately, I think a good Speaker knows that the work of this body, when it happens the right way, it happens because not a one person, not a couple of people, 49 people are working together. Those voices of those communities are heard. And I will step back and let that process play out. And I also think a good Speaker needs to have the wisdom to understand when to step back and, and when also to step forward and when strength is needed to help get coalitions together.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

And I hope and pray that I have the wisdom to make that-- the right decision when the time comes. And the last thing I'll say, colleagues, is something that I think is incredibly important, even though it's the last thing I'm going to say. This is very serious work. We represent constituents that have real serious issues. This is an important place to be, being a senator is serious. Being Speaker would certainly be serious. And we should take those issues seriously. I know everyone here does. But I think oftentimes that in doing so we sometimes forget, especially in this political environment, we forget, I think, an important part of the human condition, which is joy. You know, we think about empathy and hard work and doing the right thing, determination for our, for our communities. And we all-- I know we all have those, but sometimes it's easy to forget about the unbelievable blessing it is for all of us to be here. And I'll tell you, I won't commit to you that I'll be smiling everyday. In fact, I'm sure that I won't everyday, but I will enjoy every minute of it of the next two years is going to fly by. I will enjoy the people. I'll enjoy the process. And you have commitment-- my commitment to do the best I can to try to inject a little bit of spirit of joy into what we're doing. This is important work, but it is such a blessing for us to all be together for these next two years. Colleagues, you have my commitment to do everything I can to make this place run right. If it, if it runs right, it will unleash the creative energies and talents of every one of you who speak for thousands of others in your communities. And if we do that and keep our eyes to the horizon and maybe use a little imagination and try to make the imaginary real and tackle the challenges the way I know Nebraskans expect that we will then I think we'll join a long list and a long line of pioneers and be new pioneers using our own creative, practical solutions to make our state a better place. I'd be deeply honored to be your Speaker, and I ask for your vote. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hilgers. Are there any further nominations? Seeing none, the Chair declares the nominations closed. Senator Matt Hansen, you're recognized for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move the nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Hilgers.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you've heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Speaker Hilgers. The Chair recognizes Senator DeBoer for a motion.

**DeBOER:** Mr. President, I move that a committee of five be appointed to escort the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to the Legislative

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Chamber for the purpose of administering the oath of office to the officers of the Legislature.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator DeBoer. The motion before you is to select a committee of five. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. The Chair hereby announces the following five to serve as the escort committee: Senator Groene, Senator Wishart, Senator Lowe, Senator Machaela Cavanaugh, and Senator Clements. If those five senators could please retire to the rear of the Chamber and proceed to the Chief Justice's Office. The Chair recognizes the Sergeant at Arms.

**SERGEANT AT ARMS:** Mr. President, your committee now escorting the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the great state of Nebraska, Mike Heavican.

**FOLEY:** Members, please be seated. The Chair recognizes the Chief Justice of the Nebraska State Supreme Court, the Honorable Mike Heavican.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Please be seated, and I will do further oaths. And the first oath will be for Speaker of the Legislature, who is apparently Senator Mike Hilgers. Senator Hilgers, please come forward. I believe we can do yours with you coming down front. And please raise your right hand. Do you, Mike Hilgers, solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Nebraska and will faithfully discharge the duties of Speaker of the Legislature according to the best of your ability, and that at the election at which you were chosen to fill said office, you have not improperly influenced in any way the vote of any elector and have not accepted, nor will you accept or receive directly or indirectly any money or other valuable thing from any corporation, company or person or any promise of office for, for any official act or influence for any vote you may give or withhold on any bill, resolution or appropriation? If so, please say I swear or I affirm.

**HILGERS:** I swear.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you very much and congratulations. [APPLAUSE] And now I will swear in the Clerk of the Legislature. And there's no surprise here, it is Patrick O'Donnell. Please raise your right hand. Do you, Patrick O'Donnell, solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Nebraska and will faithfully discharge the duties of

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Clerk of the Legislature according to the best of your ability? If so, please answer either I so swear or I so affirm.

**CLERK:** I so swear.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you. Congratulations. [APPLAUSE] And now the Assistant Clerk of the Legislature, Richard Brown and Brandon Metzler. This is getting complicated. Would each of you please raise your right hand. Do you, Richard Brown, and you, Brandon Metzler, solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Nebraska and will faithfully discharge the duties of Assistant Clerk of the Legislature according to the best of your ability? If so, please answer either I so swear or I so affirm.

**RICHARD BROWN:** I so swear.

**BRANDON METZLER:** I so swear.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you very much. Congratulations. [APPLAUSE] And now the Sergeant at Arms, Doug Donscheski. Please raise your right hand. Do you, Doug Donscheski, solemnly swear or affirm that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the state of Nebraska and will faithfully discharge the duties of Sergeant at Arms according to the best of your ability? If so, please answer either I so swear or I so affirm.

**SERGEANT AT ARMS:** I so swear.

**MIKE HEAVICAN:** Thank you very much. Congratulations. [APPLAUSE] And that concludes the taking of oaths.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chief Justice. Would the escort committee please return to the front of the Chamber for purpose of escorting the Chief Justice from the Chamber. The Chair recognizes Senator McDonnell.

**McDONNELL:** Mr. President, I move to proceed to the election of the Chairperson of the Committee on Committees.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator McDonnell. The motion before you is to proceed with the election of the Chair of the Committee on Committees. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Nominations are now open for the position of Chairman of the Committee on Committees. Senator Hilkemann, you're recognized.

**HILKEMANN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Colleagues and friends, I rise to place my name in nomination for the Chairperson of the Committee on

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Committees. First of all, I want to congratulate Senator Hilgers on his election to Speaker. And I also appreciate the fact that he moved to where he is now so I can keep an eye on the Speaker again, as I did last year. So thank you. It's been an honor to be elected twice by my colleagues to serve in this role. The work of our committee has always been diligent, transparent, and fair. The Omaha World-Herald yesterday in its editorial expressed the importance of building trust. And I believe that begins with how we structure our committees. I pledge to lead with the goal of forming committees that can work well together to best serve the people of the great state of Nebraska. I humbly ask for your vote. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hilkemann. Are there further nominations? I see none. The Chair declares the nominations closed. Senator Hansen, you're recognized for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move the nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Hilkemann.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Hilkemann. Chair recognizes Senator Bostelman for a motion.

**BOSTELMAN:** Good morning, good morning, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the remaining 12 members of the Committee on Committees and that we authorize the members residing within each of the 3 districts as enumerated in Rule 3, Section 2 to nominate 4 members to be elected by the legislative body to serve on the Committee on Committees.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Bostelman. The question before you is the election of the remaining members of the Committee on Committees. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Will each of the caucuses please submit their report to the front of the Legislature, please. Those reports have been submitted. The Chair recognizes Senator Halloran for a motion.

**HALLORAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I move the approval of the nominees to the Committee on Committees.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Halloran. The question before the body is the approval of the nominees. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. We'll now proceed to the election of the Chairperson of the Executive Board. The Chair recognizes Senator Hilkemann for a motion. Proceed to the election of

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Chairperson of Committee on Committees [SIC]. Senator Hilkemann, you're recognized for a motion.

**HILKEMANN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hilkemann. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. We'll proceed now to the election of Chairperson of the Executive Board. Nominations are now open. Senator Hughes, you're recognized.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. Welcome to the new members of the Legislature. Looking forward to working with you, developing our relationships. And welcome back to the returning colleagues and friends that I have served with the last couple of years. I rise this morning to place my name in nomination for Chairman of the Executive Committee. I've had the privilege of serving on the Executive Board for the last six years, my entire tenure within the Legislature. I've had the opportunity to see how important the Executive Committee or the Executive Board is to the function of this body. I've gained a lot of experience during that time. Some good, some-- I had to learn that lesson a couple of times, but I did learn it. I've spent the last four years as Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, and that's been a valuable learning ground for me as to how to handle a committee, how to make sure that my committee members are informed, they know where we're meeting, when we're meeting, what the task ahead of us is. But it's also about keeping the entire body informed. As Chairman of the Executive Board, it is the board of the entire body. And I will commit to you that that will be my job to make sure that you are informed what the Executive Board is doing. A lot of you don't know a lot about what the Executive Committee does. Probably the most that you know about or hear about is referencing because we do have some challenges once in a while in deciding where your bills go. And I take that responsibility very seriously because our committee system is the people's house. We need to make sure that each bill that we introduce as senators gets a fair hearing in the proper committee to make sure that the voices of our constituents, the citizens of the state of Nebraska are heard. The Executive Board does some other things. We appoint special committees, which many of you have served on. And I take that very seriously as well as I know the entire board will. But probably most importantly is the Executive Committee, and hopefully me as your Chairman of that committee, makes sure that the Legislature works, keeping the trains running on time, making sure that we have the correct personnel in the correct spot to get the job done. Quite frankly, it is our job and

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

mine specifically as an Executive Board member and hopefully as Chairman to protect the institution. We cannot lose faith of the Nebraska people in our government. And this is the highest profile institution of state government there is. And it's extremely important that we do our job professionally in a timely fashion so that we maintain that trust with the citizens of the state of Nebraska. I know several of you have heard me say it before, but some of the best advice I've ever been given, especially about making a speech: If you want to be seen, stand up. If you want to be heard, speak up. But if you want to be appreciated, shut up. I would appreciate your vote for Chairman of the Executive Board. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hughes. Are there further nominations? Seeing none, I declare the nominations closed. Senator Hansen for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Hughes.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you've heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Congratulations, Senator Hughes. Senator Ben Hansen, you're recognized for a motion.

**B. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the Vice Chairman-- Vice Chairperson of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you heard the motion to proceed to the election of the Vice Chair of Executive Board. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Nominations are now open for the position of Vice Chairperson of Executive Board. Senator Vargas, you're recognized.

**VARGAS:** Thank you very much. Good morning and welcome again to our new members of the Legislature and to all returning members. My colleagues, today I'm asking for your vote for Vice Chair of the Executive Board of the One Hundred Seventh Legislature. Now my work over the past four years in the Legislature has been marked by a commitment to developing positive working relationships with senators from every corner of our state and for a variety of ideological perspectives. Together, we've been able to pass legislation and a budget that is fair to as many of our Nebraskan neighbors and communities as possible. I've been honored to serve on the Appropriations Committee the past four years under Chairman Stinner, which has given me critical experience in having difficult

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

conversations to resolve differences and find compromises to balance our budget and make smart investments for our future while best serving Nebraskans. And over the last two years, I've served as Vice Chair of the Executive Board and it has truly been an honor. I've worked to help solve issues facing our Legislature and our state. Now this is especially true in the last eight months as I've worked with our Chair, Senator Hilgers and new Speaker Hilgers and staff and other leaders to implement health and safety measures to protect everyone in our Capitol from the spread of COVID-19. With the assistance and support of so many in our legislative family, we were able to rise to the occasion, come together around a common goal and take a pragmatic and commonsense approach that kept us all safe when we reconvened this past summer. This is just one example of my willingness and ability to work across the ideological and geographic aisles and find compromise. Now my values-driven and consensus-seeking philosophy has also been demonstrated through my work as Chair of Legislature Planning Committee and as co-chair of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, where I've worked together with stakeholders on commonsense, evidence-based, cost-efficient juvenile justice reform. Aside from my legislative accomplishments, I think it is also critical and really important to talk briefly about why I want to continue to serve as Vice Chair of the Executive Board and what I hope to continue to work towards. If reelected, I will continue to focus my attention on strategic planning for our Legislature, a carryover and intersection of the work as Chair of Legislature Planning Committee. I'll also work to make sure we continue to have fair bill referencing for every senator to make sure there is a fair process for people being assigned to special committees, to make sure we work through internal HR and other staff procedures, to make sure that we are a model of what we can be doing across the state of Nebraska and across other states. And I've come to recognize that the critical components to doing this is making sure we're upholding fairness and order. I believe my experience building consensus seeking pragmatic legislative solutions and working to develop strong relationships with fellow colleagues gives me the framework and background necessary to continue to push forward to practices to make sure our Executive Board is meeting the needs of Nebraskans and in particular, staff and senators alike. Now the most important thing for you to take away from all this, which I think is true of all of us, but is worth repeating, I respect and honor our Unicameral's nonpartisan tradition and the history of consensus building and compromise. Since day one, I have worked everyday to respect and uphold those values, and I will continue to do so if reelected as Vice Chair. At its best, our country and our state's government and democracy highlights civility, honesty and integrity. And at our best we find common ground and compromise



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

that allows us to serve our communities honorably, even though we might have differences at times. Actively listening and engaging in tough conversations sets a critical precedence for our constituents and forerunners, and is a common thread that I heard from others that have just recently been elected. Today I urge you and ask you to look past whether I represent an urban or rural district and whether we agree on hot button ideological issues or not, or to think instead of the quality of the work and the quality of what we've been able to accomplish and what we've done together. And your ability to trust me, to listen to you, to work with you, to act fairly and justly and without bias and as a leader on our Executive Board. Now know that I am a person of my word and that I hold integrity as the highest value in my public service. I have proven that day in and day out as a fellow senator, as Chair of Planning Committee, and as Vice Chair of the Executive Board these last several years, I hope I have earned your trust. I hope I've earned your confidence and I really hope I've earned your vote for reelection to Vice Chair of the Executive Board. Last thing I'll say is a special thank you to all of you. Amidst everything we've been going through these last couple of years as a family that we are, we always have special things that we've been able to share and work through, and our families and our loved ones are the most important people to us. And so many of you, this family has been here for me with my daughter being born last year, being in the NICU to now my new son, Luca, who was born on New Year's Eve. This is truly a family. And like a family, sometimes we agree and disagree, but we do love each other and we care about each other. And that takes hard work, that takes compromise, and that takes intent. And I am willing to continue to do that because that is what I believe is necessary, not only in this role, but in every single position of leadership that we'll be electing here today. Thank you very much. And I humbly ask for your vote for reelection to Vice Chair of Executive Board.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Vargas. Additional nominations? Senator Slama, you're recognized.

**SLAMA:** Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning, everyone. I rise this morning to place my name into nomination for Vice Chair of the Executive Board. I'm running for Vice Chair to give a voice to your concerns and protect the institution of the Legislature. But first, I'd like to welcome all the new members along with their family members, whether you're here today or watching from home, whether it be your spouse, your child, your mom or dad or even your grandma or grandpa that's being sworn in today. Thank you so much for sharing your family with us. We're grateful they're here and able to serve. Over the last few years, this body and our state have faced challenges

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

we never could have anticipated. There are 12 of us on the floor today that were freshmen senators in 2019. In our first year, we suffered the costliest natural disaster in our state's history and then our second year brought a global pandemic. In spite of these challenges, we came together as a body to pass a package with property tax relief, business incentives and funding for a generational economic development project. That's what this institution does best. It wades through tough issues in times of crisis to find solutions that work best for all Nebraskans. There are plenty of other examples of that. But my point is this, our best moments, just as George Norris intended, happen when we rise above what separates us, whether they be partisan or urban-rural divides to support policies to best serve our state. That's so important when we look at what's on our plate in this session. Whether you represent Ainsworth or Adams, Mitchell or Millard, no matter the makeup of your district, we each have a role in rising above our differences to fairly and transparently serve our state well. We need an Executive Board that is committed to the values that this body was founded on, free from self-interest and wholly dedicated to serving all 49 members of this body. My experience serving as Chair of the Enrollment and Review Committee and helping guide bipartisan legislation across the finish line will help me serve you and this body well. A very wise man, now former Speaker, Jim Scheer, gave me this advice when I first took office: Your word is your bond. And I give you my word on this. As your Vice Chair, I will serve each and every single one of you by listening to your concerns, being honest, fair and accountable. Most of all, I will protect this institution and be strong in the face of any threats to its integrity. That's my promise. I humbly ask for your vote to serve you as Vice Chair of the Executive Board. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Slama. Are there further nominations? I see none. I declare the nominations closed. Because this is a contested race, I will need to appoint three members as tellers. Those three members would please prepare their own ballots, submit them to the Clerk or the Assistant Clerk, and then come forward to the Clerk's desk for instructions. Members, as you prepare your own ballots, please move them to the center aisle and someone will collect that-- your ballot from you. The following three senators are selected as tellers for this first race: Senator Briese, Senator Hunt, Senator Halloran. Members, the vote totals are 26 votes for Senator Vargas, 23 votes for Senator Slama. Congratulations, Senator Vargas. Senator Friesen, you're recognized for a motion.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the other six members of the Executive Board of the Legislative Council as outlined in 50-401.01. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Friesen. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Mr. Clerk, you're recognized.

**CLERK:** I do, Mr. President. I have the reports: First District has selected Senators Geist and Pansing Brooks as nominees for the Executive Board; Second District, Senators Lathrop and McCollister; Third District, Senators Lowe and Slama.

**FOLEY:** The Chair recognizes Senator Walz for a motion.

**WALZ:** Thank you, thank you, Mr. President. I move the approval of the nominees to the Executive Board of the Legislative Council.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Walz. The question is the adoption of the caucus reports. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The caucus reports are adopted. We'll now proceed to the elections of the standing committee chairperson. Chair recognizes Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to proceed to the election of the standing committee chairpersons in accordance with Rule 3, Section 8(a).

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Moser. The question is the adoption of the motion to proceed to the election of the standing committee chairpersons. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. We'll start with the Chair of the Agriculture Committee. Nominations are now open for the Chairman-- Chairperson of the Agriculture Committee. Senator Halloran, you're recognized.

**HALLORAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, Nebraska and good morning, colleagues. I have to agree with our newly elected Speaker Hilgers. He commented that there should be more joy in what we do because there just simply should be more joy in what we do. I think part of joy is having a heart of gratitude. So I would like this morning to express some of my gratitude. Everyday I thank God for the blessings of living in a country which honors life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Everyday I thank God for living in this great state of Nebraska with its abundance of natural resources, both land and water and especially its citizens. I'm grateful of Nebraska's hardworking farmers and ranchers, caretakers of our land and water, who provide Nebraska, our nation and the world with abundant food and

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

fiber. I wish to thank this legislative body for electing me to Chair to the Agriculture Committee two years ago. It has been an honor. Thank you also to the members of the Agriculture Committee who dedicated themselves to ushering in legislation through the hearings and to the floor for debate. Many thanks to my personal and committee staff for their tireless efforts in assisting the committee in creating an open and fair bill process for all the bills brought before the Agriculture Committee. It would be an honor to be reelected as Chair of the Agriculture Committee. Colleagues, I would greatly appreciate your vote as I pursue once again the Chairmanship of the Agriculture Committee. Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Halloran. Are there further nominations? I see none. The Chair declares the nominations closed. Senator Hansen for a motion, please.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Halloran.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Halloran, Chairman of the Agriculture Committee. We'll now proceed to the Chairmanship of the Committee on Appropriations. Nominations are now open. Senator Stinner.

**STINNER:** Thank you, Mr. President. Members of the Legislature, I rise today requesting your vote to be reelected as the Chair of the Appropriations Committee. I, first of all, have to give a shout out to my wife, Rita. She's in Gering right now. Actually, Saturday, she drove down here, got me set up, drove back. And for that, I'm eternally grateful. But she did give me some advice. She said, honey, you don't have to be charming and you don't have to be witty or eloquent, just be yourself. So that's what I'm going to be is myself. Thought we needed to have that right. Anyhow, four years ago, I stood in front of this body and asked to become Chairman. At that time, we were almost a billion dollar short in revenue. Forecasting Board met in February and we were \$1.2 billion short in revenue. Obviously, the Appropriations Committee was able to deliver a balanced budget after a lot of work and some tears, actually. We actually worked out two budgets in that year, which was, I guess, a record. According to John Kuehn, it was a record, so I believe that. Now we have COVID and COVID has presented this body with a lot of uncertainty, a lot of challenges. And certainly for the Appropriations Committee, it's important that we try to get this budget to the floor as quickly as possible. And so I've been working with the Fiscal Office to try to

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

come up with an accelerated budget process. Now I want to say accelerated budget process, but it's still going to be a deep dive. We're still going to do our due diligence. We're still going to do a thorough job of reviewing and investigating. But we have to change the process. We need to get a budget to the floor as quickly as possible. The one great thing is I'm blessed with a group of folks that have experience, that really have, have done a great job of digging down and understanding the budget process, understanding the different agencies. And I think that, that will make it a little bit easier to do. I want to thank this Legislature for four years of support that you've given me. I appreciate it. I've tried to be as fair and as balanced in my approach as I possibly can be. I've tried to keep an open door and I've tried to be a good listener. With that, I would ask that you vote again to reelect me as Chair of Appropriations. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Stinner. Are there further nominations? I see none. The Chair declares the nominations closed. Senator Hansen for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Stinner.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you've heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Stinner. Proceeding now to the Chairperson of Banking, Commerce and Insurance. Nominations are now open. Senator Williams.

**WILLIAMS:** Thank you, Mr. President. And good morning again, colleagues. I am humbled and honored to have had the opportunity to serve these past years as your Chairman of the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. Today, I start my seventh year in, in this body. All six of my previous sessions have been on the Banking, Commerce and Insurance Committee. I served as Vice Chair during the first four years and Chairman these last two years. We pride ourselves in the committee to be efficient, use our time well, and get bills across the finish line as quickly as possible. I was born and raised, as you know, in Gothenburg, did my undergraduate in law school at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and have been a lifelong banker since that time. Had the opportunity to serve that industry in many capacities, including Chairman of the Nebraska Bankers Association and then as Chairman of the American Bankers Association, which is the largest financial trade association in the world. Most importantly though over these years, I've been able to develop a significant relationship with both the Department of Insurance and the Department of Banking. We are blessed to have these two departments that, by the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

way, take no tax dollars to operate. They are cash-run agencies deriving their revenue to run their offices from the industries that they regulate. I think that's important to know. My relationship with Bruce Ramage at the Department of Insurance helps us greatly when we're dealing with those issues and also with the new director of the Department of Banking, Kelly Lammers, who I have known for in excess of 30 years as he was at the beginning of his career a field examiner located out of the Kearney state office. I have a significant background in the issues that come to the committee. They are oftentimes very technical and take time to understand. And that is a strength that I think I bring to the table. As I said when I started, I have been humbled and honored to serve in this capacity. And I would ask for your vote to continue that service for my last two years in the body. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Williams. Are there further nominations? I see none. The Chair declares the nominations closed. Senator Hansen for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous, excuse me, unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Williams.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Williams. Nominations are now open for the Chairperson of the Business and Labor Committee. Senator Matt Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President, and members of the Legislature. I rise to nominate myself to be reelected as Chair of the Business and Labor Committee. First thing I'm going to do is deviate from my script a little bit. As I've been listening to some of the other floor speeches this morning, I realized I had forgotten something when I prepared my written remarks, and that was to thank my wife, Jane, who's currently watching over the camera. She's just in my office and my family for all their support over the years. For those of you who are new, for those of you who are returning, I'm sure if you don't know already, you will find out that the amount of effort and attention this job demands makes it more than just your own personal service. Is, in fact, a service and a duty and a gift your whole family gives to the state of Nebraska. So I wanted to start there. So going to my prepared remarks, I'd like to start off this speech with a similar thought to as I did two years ago, and that is I've been fortunate to spend the past six years serving my district in northeast Lincoln and serving the state of Nebraska and learning from some great chairmen and women of our body, both past and present during that

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

time. What I've learned is the importance of the standing committee Chair to the process and basic functionality of the Legislature. This is something I don't-- I know I didn't fully appreciate myself when I first walked into this Chamber my first session. When I looked to the individuals who have been the best committee chairs to work with in the Legislature, I find myself not necessarily thinking of chairs that I agreed with in terms of issues, not the chairs I agreed with in terms of bills or even the chairs who I agreed with best in terms of world view. The best chairs I have worked with in my career are the ones who on which I agree with the how the committee should function, the ones I agree with the committee process. Those chairs were effective, efficient, helpful and, and involved with the processes in the committee and those chairs who agreed with the values that are needed to bridge consensus and build trust in this Legislature. This is the role model I hold myself to, and I feel that I've shown that in my work. Perhaps more specifically, when I ran two years ago, I shared two key values that I intended to uphold. The first one was an openness and approachability. I know that we may not always agree. After all, as a legislative body, we represent diverse constituencies and have a diverse set of views on how to best move the state forward. But I feel it is a duty as a Chair to be able to approach everyone with openness and transparency. Ultimately, any piece of legislation that is introduced needs to tap into the consensus of this body to help get it passed. And in that way it becomes an embodiment of our efforts to work together. A second value that I think I possess is-- and is also fundamental to this Legislature as a whole and to a committee Chair, in particular, is the ability to be fair. I believe a proposed bill can only receive true discussion and debate when senators feel comfortable with the fairness of the process. They feel their voices have been heard. They feel they've been able to make their arguments and make their case, and that a final vote on a bill is representative of how well they have or have not proven their case to the committee because they, in fact, have faith that the committee process was handled fairly. I believe through my six years in this body and these past two in leadership, I've shown my commitment to these values and practice. For instance, over the past two years, 53 bills were introduced to Business and Labor Committee. Of those, a full third, one in three was ultimately passed into law by this body and a number of others were in good standing to pass having been advanced in committee unanimously. I'm proud of that, not just to show the volume of work, but to me it shows that a committee that worked well and took its duties seriously. I believe that my values were also clear in the selections of the four committee priorities we worked on these past two years. All four committee priorities passed and had the strong support of the committee coming out of committee. These bills

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

included a package of needed updates to our workers compensation system in 2019 that we built by working towards consensus with a number of senators, advocacy groups and business groups. Likewise, last year in 2020, one of our committee priorities was a bill of my own that I introduced with the intent of improving workforce data and educational partnerships, which is supported by the Chamber as a workforce priority and was a recommendation that got its start in Blueprint Nebraska. These consensus-building actions, like many others over my tenure, have shown my commitment to those values and my efforts to work with different senators and groups on a variety of issues. At the end of the day, I view myself as a problem solver and I'm committed to working on efficient and effective solutions with everyone in this body. I know that I've been able to build trust within this body and that I've shown commitment and accountability to openness in my individual work, as well as my passion for a fair process. I hope that you all share these values with me and that I've earned your trust. Finally, I hope that I can earn your vote in confidence to continue-- to-- excuse me, and earn your vote and confidence to continue as a committee Chair. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Matt Hansen. Additional nominations? Senator Ben Hansen.

**B. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President and fellow colleagues, both new and old, even though I do feel bad calling some of you old. I appreciate the opportunity to come up here and speak to you about this position and why I feel my personal philosophy, my experience and goals would lend itself well to the responsibility as Chair of the Business and Labor Committee. First, many of you know by now already my approach to government interaction when it comes to the business sector. I believe that government interference should be minimal to allow the free market and the uninterrupted collaboration between buyer and seller to take place. But I also believe there's a role that government can play in such areas as contract law, labor conditions, and employer- employee relations. Just to name a few. It is in this balance that we can find a place where everyone benefits and thrives in a fair and just environment. Secondly, I would like to give a just a brief overview of my experience in the business community that I feel are a crucial aspect in this role. Over the last 13 years, I have been involved in starting multiple businesses from the ground up as owner of two chiropractic clinics with multiple doctors and staff, along with two other successful businesses. And I believe this real-world experience has given me a unique perspective when it comes to government relations to business. And this knowledge, I believe, is crucial when it comes to the role of government and how it should or



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

should not be integrated within the business sector. Being on the Blair City Council for four years and the Washington County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors for eight years has also given me a broad view of how municipalities and local businesses are involved and affected by what we do here. And I feel I have learned a great deal as the current Vice Chair of the Business and Labor Committee and hope to take that knowledge a step farther. And I also believe that my career in business, professional experiences and resolve to listen and act with fairness will benefit the Legislature in this capacity. Finally, my goal as Chair would be to always be thoughtful of my fellow senators, our constituents, the business community, and the institution when making decisions on behalf of this committee. So I would appreciate your consideration and I do humbly ask for your vote for the great duty and honor of chairing the Business and Labor Committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Ben Hansen. Are there further nominations? I do not see any. I declare the nominations closed. Once again, we have a contested race. We'll need three tellers. Would the following three senators, please serve us as tellers: Senator Lindstrom, Senator Erdman, and Senator Blood. If all senators could please prepare your ballots, obviously you'll need to write both the first name and the last name. The vote tallies are 26 votes for Senator Ben Hansen, 23 votes for Senator Matt Hansen. Congratulations, Senator Ben Hansen. Nominations are now open for the Chairperson of the Committee on Education. Senator Groene, you're recognized.

**GROENE:** Welcome, colleagues, new, I guess you would call them renewed, and returning senators. It is good to be here with you as we prepare to do the work of the people. Colleagues, after four productive years as your Chairman of the Education Committee, I stand here to ask you to once again entrust me with the leadership of that committee. If I may, I will refresh your memory or inform the new senators of what that committee has accomplished over the last four years. We have worked well with the Department of Education to address their issues. We have established a good relationship with the Department and Commissioner Blomstedt, a relationship built on trust. Committee has successfully worked with the Appropriations Committee and the Governor to fit school funding into our budget. Senator Stinner will attest we have negotiated any requests for budget cuts to be lowered in favor of public education. We worked to assure that the smallest of the schools, Loup County with 67 students, to our largest, Omaha public schools with just over 51,000 students were treated equally and fairly. We plan on repeating that effort as we address the budget cycle that lies before us. To summarize the committee's

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

accomplishments over the past biennium session, 35 bills came out of committee, 27 were advanced to General File, 7 were amended into other bills, and 1 was brought out by pull motion. Nineteen of those were introduced by senators with progressive leanings, and 16 by senators who would be considered conservatives. Those numbers affirm that political-- that political bias is not a consideration when bills are advanced from the Education Committee. And I am proud of my work to try to keep that committee nonpartisan. It is the duty of a committee Chairman to shepherd those bills through committee that address the needs of the citizens. Always keeping in mind that we have a duty to not flood the floor with legislation that cannot possibly be addressed properly in 90 to 60 days sessions. Feelings are hurt, but any committee Chair will tell you it is our duty to make sure we have the ability to debate what does come to the floor. Passing good legislation takes time. An example is Senator Slama's LB399, the civics education legislation. The bill began in 2016 as an effort by then Senator Krist to require the civics portion of the United States naturalization test to be a prerequisite for graduation. Over the next three years, it evolved into a comprehensive redo of state statutes requiring that certain history civics, social studies, and we added financial economic standards be taught and assessed in our public schools. In 2019, the committee was finally able to get it over the finish line with the Governor's signature on it. With the support of associations representing school boards, school administrators and teachers, we introduced LB147 as an effort to create comprehensive school employee training for behavior awareness, de-escalation and intervention. A funding source was proposed through state lottery fund resources. We clarified the legal and employment protections that teachers had when it was necessary for them to do the right thing in their role as custodial caretakers of our children. Custodial. With my support, this legislative body pulled the bill from committee, and this past year we fell 1 vote short of the necessary 33 votes to overcome a filibuster. That is politics. Senator Murman is bringing a refined version of the behavior awareness and support bill this year, which 32 of you supported last year. We must pass it this year. As I said, good legislation takes time and sometimes extra-- extraordinary effort. I'm willing to do that. However, much more still needs to be done. Even though we passed a version of property tax relief last year, we still must address inequity in state funding from district to district. We must enact a new education lottery funding bill that includes necessary funding for school personnel, training, and other worthy efforts. I came to this body-- some call me a populist-- I don't consider that an insult, with the idea that I have a duty to represent individual citizens. When I decided to run for the Chair of the Education Committee, I came with the, with the perspective that a

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

child has only one shot at a good education. I have repeatedly stated that we must promote a classroom environment where children can learn to read and we must afford them a large vocabulary. For just one-- for if one can read well, all knowledge is available to them. The same holds true for math, civics, and the sciences. It is our responsibility to give our children a safe, uninterrupted learning environment. Sadly, we have not put enough emphasis on these commonsense educational goals for too long in classrooms within our state where poverty and social issues put stress on family life. We must change that perspective and I will help to address it this session. We did achieve a good start on addressing those concerns during the 2017 Session, when we helped Senator Linehan advance her reading comprehension legislation, LB651, out of a locked 4-4 committee to the legislative floor. It required schools to assess student reading skills annually through the third grade, and if found deficient, work with parents to create an individual reading improvement program. During that, interim Senator Linehan and Pansing Brooks worked together, visited schools to find innovative programs that were proving to increase reading skills. They created an amendment to improve the legislation. Meanwhile, I spent my time reassuring individual schools that the bill was not an accusation of their failure, but instead a means to reach our common goal that every child should have public education-- should leave public education with excellent reading skills. In 2018, the legislation was then amended into a committee priority bill and became law by a 33-0 vote and was eventually passed into law. Some will falsely claim I do not work well with the lobby of the education establishment. The truth is, I always work with the lobby. We may not always agree. When their focus is on the same page as the concerns I hear from parents and taxpaying citizens, we agree, as we did and will, on addressing classroom behavioral issues, lottery funding, and in many other areas concerning education. Nebraskans have expressed to me their desire that this body promote a safe and nurturing classroom environment, protect family rights, and have high expectations of student learning. We expect much from our teachers. Some may say too much, but they are on the front lines of the cultural changes in our society. We must reemphasize to teachers that they have the support of the citizens of Nebraska, give them the tools to maintain an orderly learning environment in their classrooms, aid them with training they need to help parents instill behavioral boundaries within our children. The citizens of Nebraska expect this body to be successful as we address these issues. I am willing to again lead the efforts as Chairman of the Education Committee. Thank you, colleagues, for listening and I will truly appreciate your vote.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Groene. Additional nominations? Senator Walz.

**WALZ:** Thank you, Mr. President, and good morning, colleagues. First of all, Happy New Year. I can tell you that when I woke up on January 31 [SIC], I felt relief and a new sense of hope for the future. Congratulations to all of you who are new, and welcome back to those of you who are returning. I look forward to working with all of you and doing good for our state as a whole. I rise today to say that I think it's time for new leadership on the Education Committee. After two years as Vice Chair, it is my firm belief that we would benefit from a new perspective that is proud of the accomplishments of our education system, yet wants to help facilitate opportunities and advancements in our schools. And honestly, colleagues, we have a lot of work that can be done. When I came here four years ago, I felt that one of the most important things I could do was listen. That is why you often do not see me leaving the Chamber during discussions to go down to my office. I believe that those of you who have worked with me in the past know that I am always willing to listen and have a dialogue with you, even if we don't agree. That is what you can expect from me as the Chair in the Education Committee. I promise that I will not dismiss you or what's important to you, because that is not how we make progress as a state, as a decision-making body, as a committee, or as people. As a body of representatives working to make Nebraska a state that provides a high quality of life for people, we no doubtedly will have serious issues to face, as well as tough and thoughtful discussions on this floor. But as we move forward toward that goal, it will be imperative, imperative that we tackle them together without letting ourselves get distracted, divided, and then unable to communicate. Most importantly, it is imperative that everyone have a seat at the table for those discussions because the problems that we face will not go away by ignoring them, but by working proactively together. And, colleagues, I promise to make that a priority. We must include everyone in the conversation because every single one of us benefits from the education system in our state. Whether it's ensuring that students learn the technical skills needed to join the workforce, helping an adult learner get their GED or advance their career, or providing the foundational knowledge for the next great innovator of our time. Education touches on each and every aspect of our lives. It is the key to strengthening our economy and providing opportunities for people who make Nebraska their home. We have a great education system. Our schools from preschool through post education continue to support the needs we have as a state. Just this year, Midland University introduced their brand new agricultural program, helping to meet the needs of our ag community. And in the midst of a pandemic,

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

our schools adapted and developed policies that allowed our students to stay in schools, participate in activities, and keep them safe. Colleagues, we all know the schools are the hub of our communities, they bring us together by acting not only as education facilities, but also as gathering places for both work and celebration many times underneath those Friday night lights. We have seen schools act as providers for food distribution, a safe haven for flood victims like we had in Fremont two years ago, and a place where families can turn in need. But our educators understand the number one goal is to educate students and they do what it takes to get it done. The district I serve is on the outskirts of the largest metropolitan area in the state. And at the same time, we have strong roots in small town communities, which has given me a unique position-- perspective. I understand that we need to take a hard look at TEEOSA and how it operates in order to reduce the property tax burden and ensure that rural towns can continue to thrive. And growing up in rural Nebraska, that's important to me. At the same time, we must continue to provide our teachers and students the tools and the resources they need to succeed. I know what this takes because I've been a teacher. I was a farmer's daughter. I've sat on the school board for Archbishop Bergan and I put three kids through the Nebraska education system. But most importantly, this is my passion. I care about our kids and families. I care about our communities. And like you, I want to see opportunity for all children and adults. Whether you live in Omaha, Lexington, Hayes Center, or Gering, that is how we grow Nebraska through opportunity. I know each and every one of you cares about the future of education, and I look forward to working with all of you these next four years. I'm so grateful for this opportunity to serve and I hope you will support me for the Chair of the Education Committee. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Walz. Are there any additional nominations? I see none. I declare the nominations closed. Once again, we'll need three tellers. The following three senators, please serve us as tellers: Senator DeBoer, Senator Dorn, Senator Gragert. Members, neither candidate secured the required 25 votes, we're going to need to "reballot" this race. And I'll ask the following three senators serve as tellers for the second balloting of this race: Senators Albrecht, Arch, and Vargas. So, members, if you could prepare another ballot for the Chairperson of Committee on Election-- on Education, excuse me. Members, the vote tally was 25 votes for Senator Walz, 23 votes for Senator Groene, 1 person not voting. Senator Walz, congratulations. We'll now proceed to the Chairmanship-- the "Chairpersonship" of the General Affairs Committee. Nominations are now open. Senator Briese, you're recognized.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**BRIESE:** Thank you, Mr. President, and good afternoon, everyone. I'd first like to welcome everyone here today. Great to see everybody. And I rise today to ask for your support in my bid for reelection as Chair of the General Affairs Committee. As we begin the One Hundred Seventh Legislative Session, I think it's fair to say that, you know, we could be in for a bumpy ride. There's going to be some ups and downs. But I believe that by working together, we're going to get the work done that we were sent here to do. And we have to recognize that we do live in a, in a polarized, politically-charged environment outside of this body. And I believe that within this body, everyday decency, respect and courtesy can certainly go a long ways towards ensuring that this polarization doesn't negatively impact our ability to legislate. As our businesses and citizens begin their recovery from the economic fallout of the pandemic, I believe it's imperative that this body does what it can to help facilitate and enable that recovery. We need to do what we can to help Nebraskans bounce back from the economic downturn. And there's going to be considerable legislation going before the General Affairs Committee this year that can help us do that. And I look forward to working with my fellow committee members and the body in doing everything that we can to help move our state forward, grow our state, and create opportunity for our residents. And I would be honored to serve as your-- as the Chair of the General Affairs Committee. And I would respectfully ask for your support in that regard. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Briese. Are there further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen for a motion.

**M. HANSEN:** Mr. President, I would move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Briese.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Briese. Nominations are now open for the Chairperson of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. Senator Brewer, you're recognized.

**BREWER:** Thank you, Mr. President. I would like to rise today to ask for your support to be reelected as the Chair of Government. The older senators had asked me to expedite this speech and then one of the younger ones said, well, you probably better tell us why we ought to at least vote for you. And that did seem like a fair comment. Government, Military and Veterans Affairs-- just for the sake of the incoming senators, I spent 36 years in uniform. That alone should not qualify me for this job, but understand that part of that 36 years in different assignments gives you the experience of floods, fires, tornadoes, lots of natural disasters to include being the first task

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

force commander on the ground in Katrina. Again, that alone should not qualify you. But along with those assignments also came three years aboard the NAOC, the National Airborne Operations Center, out of Offutt. For those of you that see the plane that looks much like Air Force One flying some here in Lincoln, but a lot out of Offutt, its sole mission in life is to sustain the future of our government in event of an attack. I was the operations officer on one of the teams to do that mission. Again, that alone should not qualify someone to have this position. But through that 36 years and 8 deployments, I also had the opportunity to build the Afghan National Army, the Afghan National Police Corps, and the government in Afghanistan. And along with that, spent three years doing the counternarcotics mission there. It is through that that I have had numerous opportunities to see different governments in action. When I came into this body four years ago, I'd asked to be on the Government Committee. I was blessed to have that opportunity and come to appreciate it because my other committee was banking and I was miserable. No offense, Senator Williams. The Government Committee was such a perfect fit for me and, and I felt at home there from the very beginning because what we dealt with was what I had dealt with during an entire lifetime. After I was wounded in 2012, I spent two years recuperating from those wounds and I had a chance to see the VA system up close and personal everyday. So I had a very special understanding of the good and the bad of our VA system. And so if we take the entirety of Government, Military and Veterans Affairs, I'd like to think I got a pretty good resume for it. So with that said, I would ask for your vote to be Chairman of the Government Committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Brewer. Are there any further nominations? I do not see any. I declare the nominations closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Brewer.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Brewer. Nominations are now open for Chairperson of Health and Human Services Committee. Senator Arch, you're recognized.

**ARCH:** Thank you. I rise this afternoon as a candidate for the Chairmanship of the Health and Human Services Committee. I would consider it an honor to serve in this capacity. Working in healthcare administration over my career, I learned to work with diverse opinions and to lead in an environment of teams and collaboration. Those are essential skills to achieve the outcome of better care for the patients. I would bring those same skills to the role of Chairmanship

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

and pledge to be fair and respectful of a variety of opinions on issues. Continuing in the same thought, I want to read a verse from James, Chapter 1, because I would like this verse to guide my behavior. My dear brothers-- this is Verse 19-- Chapter 1:19. "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." Over the past two years, I served on the Health and Human Services Committee in the capacity of Vice Chairman serving with Senator Howard. It was during this time that the committee dealt with many issues, including the crisis at the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center. The committee members established a path forward on all of these issues by seeking consensus among the members to pass significant legislation to improve services in our state. Much of my time during this past interim was spent serving as Chairman of the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center Special Oversight Committee. The report from that committee was published on December 15. My staff and I also conducted an interim study to analyze the impact of emergency changes to telehealth regulations and the expansion of telehealth beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The immediate future holds many challenges and opportunities. Over the years, this committee has dealt with many difficult issues and has provided the necessary oversight to produce sound, thoughtful policy to guide us. We already know that this year will have its own challenges, but we also know that opportunities await us. The opportunities come in the form of difficult questions, unfortunately, such as: Are the people in our state getting healthier given the amount of resources we are applying? If not, what can we do to see improvement? For the first time, we may have the data in our state's health information exchange to begin to answer those questions. Beginning to tackle some of the more difficult questions together is a huge opportunity. I believe with my education and career background and HHS Committee experience, I can serve effectively as Chairman, being mindful of the interests of Nebraska citizens, my fellow senators, and those providing services. It would be an honor to serve as Chair of the Health and Human Services Committee. I'm asking for your vote today and I look forward to working with you on healthcare and other issues that impact our citizens. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Arch. Are there further nominations? I see none. I declare the nominations closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Arch.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say-- signal by saying aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Arch.



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Nominations are now open for Chairperson of Judiciary Committee.  
Senator Lathrop.

**LATHROP:** Thank you, Mr. President, and colleagues, good afternoon. I would like to begin by welcoming the new members and in particular, Senator Flood, my former Speaker and friend, Senator Pahls, my friend and former colleague and former city councilman. He was my city councilman. I think he did a decent job there, and Senator Aguilar. It means a lot to me that they, they felt strongly enough to make the sacrifice to return to this body, and I'm looking forward to working with them again. I'm starting my eleventh year. By the way, the purpose in me standing up is to place my name in nomination for Judiciary Committee. And I would very much appreciate your support today. I begin today, my eleventh year. I have spent each of the past ten years of service on the Judiciary Committee. I, in the past, chaired Business and Labor Committee for six years. I've chaired two special investigative committees that put out reports that were unanimous. And I've spent the last two years chairing the Judiciary Committee. That committee, as it does every year, is going to face significant, significant issues. We have front and center is the direction we are going to take with the Department of Corrections in the face of a decision about whether we are going to try to build our way out or try to find some other solution not to the exclusion of construction, but a thoughtful long-term approach. We have worked on these issues in the Judiciary Committee, and I'm proud to say that in the two years that I have been Chair, each senator who has appeared before that committee has been treated with respect, their bills taken seriously, those that have come to the floor have been distilled, cleaned up, and they are ready for your consideration. But not only are the senators treated with respect before the Judiciary Committee in the last two years, but the testifiers are too. And I'm proud to say, I am proud to say that committee stayed as late as it need to to hear every single person that came before that committee to be heard on an issue that was important to them. That committee also held two listening sessions this summer after the death of George Floyd and the concerns expressed by the public in their relationship with the police department. That committee spent two days and heard 185 different people appear before that committee to express their concerns and their experiences and offer solutions that they would like to see implemented. I am very proud of the work of the Judiciary Committee. I would very much appreciate the opportunity to continue that work with the promise that when you are in front of that committee, you will be treated with respect, your bills treated seriously, and my door will always be open to work through any concerns relative to legislation. And with that, I would appreciate your support. Thank you.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Lathrop. Are there any further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move the nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Lathrop.

**FOLEY:** Members, you've heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Lathrop. Nominations are now open for Chairperson of the Natural Resources Committee. Senator Gragert.

**GRAGERT:** Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to nominate myself for the Chair-- Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee. First, I, I too would like to welcome all the senators back to the Chamber and applaud the newly-elected senators for their dedication to their communities and, and representing their constituents in the Nebraska Legislature. I hope your service is, is nothing but short of rewarding. Colleagues, this is my attempt to put my best foot forward in applying for the Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. I believe I will serve well as the committee Chair, as I have built my career on land conservation and I have been a member of the Natural Resources Committee for the past two years. I graduated from the University of Nebraska with a natural resources degree in 1985. After graduating college, I went to work for the Natural Resources Conservation Service for 31 years as a sole conservationist. During those three decades, I worked with local, state, and federal partners becoming well-versed in many natural resources issue facing Nebraska. Furthermore, in 2019, my first year in the Legislature, Legislature, I prioritized LB243, a bill to create the Healthy Soils Task Force. Over the past year and a half, I have been a part of that Healthy Soils Task Force. The mission of the task force was to address how Nebraska can become the nation's leader in healthy, productive, and sustainable soils. With input from over 30 government and nongovernment agencies, the task force balanced all stakeholders' input and crafted an exceptional report. I plan to bring this same willingness to the Natural Resources Committee. I am confident in my ability to lead the Natural Resources Committee if elected Chair. I will always be honest, unbiased and consistent. Colleagues, of the seven Army values that I have lived most of my adult life, integrity is the most important to me. I have come here with my integrity and I will leave here with my integrity. I guarantee you that each bill that comes before the committee will have a fair shot and will be carefully reviewed. As Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee, I pledge to give this position my full and undivided attention. I would be honored to be elected as the next

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

Chairman of the Natural Resources Committee and humbly ask for your vote. Thank you, colleagues. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Gragert. Additional nominations? Senator Bostelman.

**BOSTELMAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good afternoon, colleagues. Welcome back those who are returning and welcome to our new colleagues that are on the floor today. It's wonderful to see you all again back here on-- in the Legislature. I submit to you my name for the position of Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. Over the last four years, I've had the privilege of serving as Vice Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. During this time, I've had the opportunity to, opportunity to chair hearings and work with committee staff ensuring that hearings are held in a fair and equitable manner, both here in the Capitol and in hearings across the state. This has provided me with a great understanding of the unequaled hearing process. The experience in committee procedures and preparedness is important to the, to the success of each senator receiving a complete and appropriate consideration of their bill. The process begins the day the bill is referred to committee and continues to the work of the Executive meetings and going to the floor. I concisely understand the committee process and will work with each senator to ensure their bill receives a fair hearing. This committee has proven to be open and welcoming-- to be a open and welcoming committee to all testifiers, treating them with respect and dignity. And I will continue to follow that position. I will work closely with all members of the committee to ensure bills that are advanced from the committee are ready for floor debate. I will also ensure a committee statement accompanies all bills. I've made my home in rural Butler County over the last 20 years. I've installed a number of forestry, soil conservation, and water management practices while working with many Nebraska agencies. These practices have not gone unnoticed because we have international farmers that come to our farm to learn how these practices have improved soil, plant, and water quality. I was selected to travel to Australia to study their surface and groundwater conservation practices, meeting with irrigation districts and learning what technologies they use and surface water management that will make a significant difference here in Nebraska. I concluded my meetings with Assistant Secretary of Water discussing their challenges with the implementation of their National Water Initiative. I also co-chaired our task force from the 2019 flooding with Senator Pansing Brooks and our committee and the task force come out with LB1201 and we want to continue that work in this next session. I am an avid outdoors person that enjoys all aspects of what Nebraska has to offer in outdoor

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

activities. Our Sandhills are unique in Nebraska, unparalleled bird migrations, internationally recognized waterways, and unique landscapes for-- from east to the west. We must preserve these resources while providing opportunities in their enjoyment and utilization. As a public power state, we are unique in the generation transmission and distribution, distribution of power. I have a great deal of knowledge of the function and operations of our public power districts and our rural electric associations. These experiences and others have prepared me well to be the Chair of the Natural Resources Committee. And I commit to you that I will continue my work to provide fair and effective leadership as your committee Chair. So I respectfully ask for your vote and thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Bostelman. Are there any additional nominations? I see none. I declare the nominations closed. It's a contested race. We'll need three members to serve as tellers. I would ask Senators Hilkemann, McDonnell, and Murman to please step forward as our tellers after you've prepared your ballot. Members, the vote tally was Senator Bostelman, 33; Senator Gragert, 14. Congratulations, Senator Bostelman. Proceeding now to nominations for the Chairperson of the Nebraska Retirement Systems Committee. Nominations are now open. Senator Kolterman.

**KOLTERMAN:** Good afternoon, Mr. President, colleagues, and welcome to the new members. Before I get into this, I have to say a few thank yous. I have to-- I'd like to thank my daughter, Jessica, for coming down to be with me today and my family and friends that have supported me the last six years and my two colleagues behind me that have been with me all the way. I'm running for Chair of the Retirement Committee for the fourth time. I've been a member of this committee since 2015 and served as Chair of the Retirement Committee since 2016. I'm proud of the accomplishments of this committee. Our state-administered retirement plans continue to rank among the top ten best funded plans in the country. I've had the privilege to work closely with the Nebraska Employees Retirement Systems, known as NPERS, their director and staff, to ensure that the state-administered retirement plans remain in compliance with all Internal Revenue Code requirements. In addition, I work closely with the state investment officer and the Nebraska Investment Council, known as NIC, and members who oversee more than \$30 billion across 32 investment programs, which includes \$18 billion in our pension and retirement plans. I believe my primary responsibility as Retirement Chair is oversight. It's vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of the public retirement plans while also monitoring the costs and benefit of our retirement plans throughout the state. I'm not afraid to take on tough issues and work to keep the

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

lines of communication open and remain accessible to all parties that are interested in working on retirement policy. I believe my leadership skill as an open door policy have helped facilitate legislative accomplishments and long-term sustainability of the Public Retirement Systems, which benefit both our local and state economies. I appreciate you once again considering me for the role of Retirement Chair. I look forward to working with a stellar staff that I have in Kate Allen, Katie Quintero, and Tyler Mahood. And I'd appreciate your vote and ask that you consider me for Chair of the Nebraska State Retirement Committee. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Kolterman. Are there any further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Kolterman.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Kolterman. Nominations are now open for Chairperson of the Committee on Revenue. Senator Linehan.

**LINEHAN:** Thank you, Mr. President. Good morning, colleagues. I rise this morning to nominate myself for Chair of Revenue Committee. First, however, I would like to welcome our new and returning members: Senator Aguilar, Senator Pahls, Senator Flood. Welcome back. Senators McKinney, Day, Bostar, Senator John Cavanaugh, and Senator Sanders. Welcome. For those who-- of you who are returning, I appreciate your commitment to public service. Your willingness to return to the Legislature is commendable. You know what we do here matters. You also know that it's challenging work. Experience is a gift. I appreciate your willingness to share the gift of experience and service to our great state. For our true freshmen, you will be shocked by what is expected of you. You will gain, gain even greater appreciation for public service. You will become close friends with people you hardly know today. And though you are new to this body, your voice is as important as every other senator on this floor. When you return four years from today, hopefully, 28 of us that are here this morning will have been term-limited, 60 percent of the body. The future will quickly fall on your shoulders. Four years pass quickly. Learn and engage immediately. Remember to ask questions. Everyday you will learn something new. Those who will not be here in four years will leave a legacy of hard work and progress. For example, and he's already mentioned this this morning, Chairman Stinner, who inherited a billion dollar deficit in his first year as Chair of the Appropriations Committee, came to this Capitol every morning at 4:00 a.m. and found a

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

way forward. And he did, though it wasn't without some pain. Others have faced very tough tasks and moved the state forward. This body inspires me. I don't agree with anyone all the time. We are 49 different people representing 1.9 million Nebraskans. The differing interests will pull us in opposite directions, but it is our duty to be mindful as a state, as a whole. We are the upper house. I have been blessed. First, I've always been able to depend on a loving family. As important as serving the Legislature is, do not lose sight that our families need us and we need them. None of us do this alone. I want to thank all the families who can't be here today on the floor as we usually do. Please know that we need you and your support and hopefully, I really do hope, before the year is out, families will be allowed to celebrate this special day in a more traditional way. In addition to my family, I've been fortunate to work with outstanding public servants for over 25 years. Whether those colleagues are here on the floor with me now or serving in our nation's capital, whether or not they are Democrats or Republicans, there is one constant. They are dedicated to making life better for all of us. How, how we accomplish that is what this body debates. I especially want to thank the members of the Revenue Committee and Speaker Scheer. The Revenue Committee faced huge challenges during the last Legislature. Each and every one of the senators serving on that committee: Senators Friesen, Crawford, Groene, Briese, Lindstrom, Kolterman, and McCollister worked tirelessly. We did have energetic debates and, yes, occasionally we raised our voices. But I am proud of the work we accomplished and I am honored to serve with them. I also want to thank my personal staff and the Revenue Committee staff who worked every bit as hard as the rest of us over the last two years. And a shout out to all the staff for the Legislature. We cannot do this job without them. In 2019, the Revenue Committee heard and helped pass the following bills: Senator Wayne and Vargas' LB86. I have in here what they all did, but I'm going to shorten it up. LB103, which was my bill; Senator McCollister's LB284, which thank goodness we did because we collected sales tax. Now imagine if we wouldn't have passed this on out-of-state retailers and multilevel vendors, [INAUDIBLE] last-- our revenues would look quite different without that bill. Thank you, Senator McCollister. Senator Williams' LB463, which is the reaction to somebody losing a farm because we needed to fix the way people were notified and Senator Williams brought that bill and we got it passed; Senator Dorn, one of the reasons he came to the Legislature, we adopted the Qualified Judgment Payment Act; Senator Lindstrom, La Grone, Wayne, and Wishart all helped with the LB610, which I am very proud of, adopted the Meadowlark Act, the Employer Matching Contribution Incentive Program, the College Savings Low-Income Matching Scholarship Program, and the change in Nebraska's educational

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

savings plan trust giving every student, every child born in the state the hope and opportunity for college education. In 2020, there was Senator Brewer's LB153, which changed provisions relating to the taxation of military retirements, which is critical for us to keep highly qualified military veterans in our state. Senator Lindstrom's LB266 that changed School Readiness Tax Credit Act. And finally, all of our bill, but the name on the bill is Senator Scheer and Slama, LB1107, which adopted the ImagiNE Nebraska Act, the Key Employer and Jobs Retention Act, Renewable Chemical Production Tax Credit Act, Customized Job Training Act, Transformational Projects Act, Nebraska Property Tax Incentive Act, as well as other related provisions. This whole body was involved in that and it was a heavy lift in the middle of a pandemic. And you all delivered and I'm proud of you, but we still face challenges. Our tax code resembles a 1967 used car, of which pieces from every other vehicle built since then have been attached. We need a tax code. You don't have to be a certified public accountant to grasp. We need a tax code that treats all Nebraskans fairly. We need a tax code that generates enough revenue to provide the services Nebraskans rightfully expect, but also appreciates that hard work, ingenuity, and talent should be rewarded. We need a tax code that welcomes new Nebraskans and keeps our homegrown talent here where they can build a better Nebraska for all. I want Nebraska to be a net migration state. I want your children, grandchildren and mine to stay here. We have to realize we're in a battle for talent and ingenuity with other states. It's a battle we need to win. Finally, I will listen to everyone. I will welcome input from everyone. And I encourage you to bring your ideas forward. I commit to you. I will be honest, forthright. I will work with each of you. I will work with the administration and our many, many stakeholders. That's my promise. I humbly ask you for your vote for Revenue Committee Chair. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Linehan. Further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move the nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Linehan.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Linehan. Nominations are now open for Chairperson of Transportation and Telecommunications Committee. Senator Friesen.

**FRIESEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I rise to place my name in nomination for the Chair of Transportation and Telecommunications. And I want to start with something I don't do often enough, and that is to thank my wife, Nancy, for supporting me these six years and for two

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

more, I hope. It's always difficult for the spouse to put up with some of the things that happen in this body. So I do appreciate the support that she's given me. So this is my sixth year on Transportation and Telecommunications, fourth year as Chair. You know, on these past couple of years with the flooding and with COVID, the impact it's had on our gas tax collections, the costs in repairing the flood-damaged roads, and obviously with COVID, the broadband that's needed when we have people working from home, school kids trying to get their education from home. We have some huge issues in this state and that we get broadband out to all areas of the state. And I know that when I say all areas, that's-- that includes cities and the rural areas. So we have a challenge ahead of us. With that, I-- you know, everything here and I will-- my colleagues that have been here with me, all you bring here is your integrity. And I've built relationships, I hope, and we go forward. Those that are new here, I hope to build relationships with you in the next two years. And I think we've got a lot of work to do and we can get it done. With that, I ask for your vote as Chair of Transportation and Telecommunications. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Friesen. Are there any further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move that nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Friesen.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Hansen. Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Friesen. Nominations are now open for Chairperson of the Urban Affairs Committee. Senator Wayne.

**WAYNE:** Thank you, Mr. President. I know we're getting to the end and we're working through lunch so I'll keep this short. I've had the honor of chairing Urban Affairs for the last four years. And during that time, I won't go through all the bills that we have moved forward, but I'll highlight a couple of them that we've expanded tremendously are, not our committee jurisdiction, but the bills that we can introduce in that-- within that jurisdiction to do some phenomenal things. We reformed and enhanced tax increment financing. In 2018, we had a big bill that we got through with the help of everybody. And then we also this year passed a constitutional amendment for extremely blighted. So now this year, we're going to hope to implement that constitutional amendment. That will be the first bill that I drop this year. Hopefully I can stay on as, with your support, Urban Affairs Chair to see this commitment through extremely blighted through the finish line. In 2020, we also passed a



Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

micro-TIF bill that Senator Groene and I worked tremendously on. And I can't thank Trevor enough to hammering out all the constitutional issues to get that passed and crossed the finish line. But this is not just-- and I don't bring just the Omaha perspective to this committee. The committee priority bill last session was for the village of Winslow. That was a small town that was devastated by the floods and needed the statutory authority to move their town. So Urban Affairs, Urban Affairs, while it's urban, it really deals with across-- with every city across the state. And this year we look to continue to grow the cities and provide them economic development tools like extremely blighted, like 86-- 860 tax incentives that they-- or not tax incentives, but sales tax that they are able to use in grant programs like North Platte and other places are using. So over the four years, we built a pretty good record and we look to continue to implement what we're going to do as far as the vision of Urban Affairs, which is making sure economics and economic development is thriving throughout the state and throughout the cities. And the cities are typically the ones who implement that and they need more tools. So I built a pretty good relationship with not just people here, but the League of Municipalities and, and actually the mayors all across the, the state and city managers to make sure that we implement and get their feedback and bring bills that work for everybody, not just Omaha and Lincoln, but everybody. And so with that, I would ask your support for the Chair of Urban Affairs, again. Thank you.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Wayne. Are there any further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. Senator Hansen.

**M. HANSEN:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move the nominations be closed and a unanimous vote by acclamation be cast for Senator Wayne.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator Wayne. That completes the election of the standing committee chairpersons. Senator Wayne, you're recognized for a motion.

**WAYNE:** Oh, sorry, I didn't-- they didn't tell me when this was coming up. I move to proceed to the election of the special and select committee chairpersons by a secret ballot.

**FOLEY:** The question is the motion to proceed to the election of the chairperson, the special and select committee chairpersons. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Proceeding now to the election of the Chairperson of the Rules Committee. Nominations are open. Senator Clements.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

**CLEMENTS:** Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President and colleagues, I am running for Chairman of the Rules Committee. My banking and insurance work for 40 years has required the careful reading and understanding of legal documents and the rules and regulations that apply to these businesses. Along with my last four years in the Legislature, I believe this experience will serve me well as Chairman of the Rules Committee. In addition, my seat here behind Senator Chambers for four years was a great learning experience on the rules of the Legislature and made me comfortable working with the rules. Since announcing for this position, I have been reading through all 64 pages of the rules to be more familiar with them. I've also served on the Appropriations Committee for the last four years and the Legislature's Planning Committee the last two years. I've always been a good listener, even though my wife Peggy may sometimes disagree. Thank you, dear. I am willing to hear everyone's point of view. If elected, I will make sure the committee is run with fairness. I believe the rules are very important to our process and therefore the committee needs to be run in such a way to instill confidence in the whole body. I would appreciate your vote as Chairman of the Rules Committee. Thank you, Mr. President.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Clements. Additional nominations? Senator DeBoer.

**DeBOER:** Thank you, Mr. President. I rise today to put my name into nomination for Chair of your Rules Committee. Today, I ask your support to chair Rules Committee, not because of what I say today, because I can make a pretty speech. I've been making speeches since I was a young person. Rather, I ask you to judge me by my actions of these last two years. I hope I have shown you in my actions that my interest is trying to guard this body, to make it run more smoothly, and to protect its unique nature. For those who do not yet know me, I look forward to working with you. And even if we disagree to help you represent those who elected you to be here, because the success of each of us is important to our constituents throughout the state. In the past if I have initially disagreed about bills with you, especially those that mattered a great deal to you, I hope that I have walked across the gap of our disagreement to find a way to help you pass those bills in a way that removed my objections. I have tried to bring others to the table to talk. Compromise and fair-- and a fair process have always been my aim, just as my constituents asked them to be when they elected me. When members came to me with an unusual or out-of-the-box idea, I listened and I took it seriously. And if I had an objection that I couldn't find a way around, I told you directly and I explained it. If you have come to me saying that there has been

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

a problem for Nebraskans and somebody needs to listen, even when that problem wasn't directly affecting me, I have tried to make solving that a priority. I commit to everyone in this room that I will listen to you, and it doesn't matter how many times we have disagreed in the past, I will treat each issue individually. If elected your Rules Chair, I would hope to use my previous experience as a lawyer to do my part in guarding the institution of this Legislature. Some of you know that part of my inspiration for running was watching this body argue about rules for weeks and weeks and knowing that we could do better and hoping that I could help create a culture in this body where we get the work done for Nebraskans and where we muffle as much as possible the partisanship, which could threaten to degrade it. In the past, I have voted in ways that perhaps some of you didn't expect because I felt it was the right thing to do. If I were elected Chair of the Rules Committee, I promise to continue that tradition. Even in this year where redistricting tries to push us more towards our party interests, I promise that my first loyalty is to this institution and to Nebraskans. I will seek the long-term interests of this state over all other things. If Chair, I would not bring an agenda of which rules I wish to change. That is not my way. I believe that the Chair of the committee is there to set a tone and then to act as a shepherdess for the proposals that come before her committee. If, if Chair, I would promote transparency, a culture of discernment where decisions are made with careful consideration of the merits and in following the process. As Rules Chair, I think that is doubly important. As a senator, I have ideas about which rules I would like changed. But as a Rules Chair, it would be my job to see that each proposal had the fair process. Our rules and the way we administer them are the very basis of our democracy, having the same set of rules for everyone, rules agreed upon over time and by as much consensus as we can muster. And applying those rules without favoritism is the fundamental upon which our democracy is built. If our rules and our adherence to rules, even our very reverence for rules fails, then our democracy falters. It is in this spirit that I run for this position. As Chair, I would make myself available to the newer members of this body as a resource on our rules. One of the difficult things about being a new member is that you can read the rules and maybe not imagine how they are applied. You don't know how they have been used in the past. You may not know our norms and you do not know our unwritten rules. This lack of clarity has often led to confusion to one member acting in a way others consider discourteous, to anger and discord. If elected Rules Chair, I would do my best to make sure the newer members learned also those unwritten rules before they unintentionally stepped across our norms. In the era of term limits, that institutional memory becomes fainter every year. It is more important than ever to make a positive

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

effort to share the knowledge with those who will be here when we are gone. I've been thinking a lot about Nike. Now bear with me for a second. Before she was a gym shoe, Nike was the Roman goddess of victory, and I was thinking about that. What would it mean to worship victory? What would it mean to prize the victory itself over the process that led you to that victory? What would it mean for your relationships with others if the thing you value most is making sure they lose? What marks would that attitude leave on you? Some days I think Nike-- Nike's worshipers would feel right at home today in the parts of our interactions with each other in this atmosphere where we only ask if we can do a thing, but we fail to ask the second question, if we should. On the other hand, I do not think Nike worshipers would find much they recognize in one that humbles himself, whose focus is on love, not on overpowering others or who describes himself as a servant to all. So when I think about the problems we face about our divisions in this body and our state, I wonder if we, too, sometimes have fallen into a trap of worshiping victory as a distinct prize of its own. And I wonder if a way to change that is to swear allegiance to a different principle, to building trust through our process and also to learning again, not just to compromise, but to take our losses without turning them into blood feuds, to swear allegiance to a commitment to live together and respect. I have learned that in this body we all lose at times. We are all in the minority at one time or another. It's unpleasant. In fact, it kind of sucks. But if we continue to focus on the health of our rule of law, when we continue to value our process, even when we disagree about the outcome of that process, then we are more like the servant of all than the one who worships victory. If I am elected as your Rules Chair, I give you now my commitment to fight against any impulse to worship victory, but to stand up for fair treatment, your fair treatment when you do not have the majority of the votes, to try to help you succeed in representing your constituents, to look out for the long-term health of the institution and to build health-- trust with all of you. And so work to build a culture here focused on the service of all Nebraskans. I believe strong and impartial rules ensure good government. Regardless of your vote today for me or for Senator Clements, I look forward and hope to building an even stronger Legislature. I've mentioned the things that I would do if I were elected your Rules Chair, but I think it is equally important to mention what I would do if I am not elected. I will continue to fight for the rule of law, for the success of every senator, for the dignity of this body. I will offer whatever assistance Senator Clements would like and I will hope for his success. How we do the things we do matters. Whether we seek victory for victory's sake or see ourselves as public servants matters. We will have many weighty decisions to make in the months to come. I look

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

forward to our service together, and today I humbly ask for your support for election as Chair of the Rules Committee.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator DeBoer. Are there any further nominations? I see none. Nominations are closed. It's a contested race. We'll need three tellers. Would the following three senators please serve us as tellers: Senators Williams, Linehan, Morfeld. The vote tally is 25 votes for Senator Clements, 24 votes for Senator DeBoer. Congratulations, Senator Clements. Senator Slama, you're recognized for a motion.

**SLAMA:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to nominate Senator McKinney to be the next Chair of the Enrollment and Review Committee. Tough job, Senator McKinney. A very big responsibility. But I think you'll grow to love the job just as I had and just as Senator Wishart also has. So feel free to deputize us any time, but enjoy the ride.

**FOLEY:** Senator Slama, is that a motion by acclamation?

**SLAMA:** Yes, sir.

**FOLEY:** Members, you heard the motion to declare Senator McKinney by acclamation as Chair of the E&R Committee. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. Congratulations, Senator McKinney. Senator Wishart, you're recognized for a motion.

**WISHART:** Thank you, Mr. President. I move to approve the report of the Secretary of State and the candidate stated therein be declared duly elected.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Senator Wishart. The question is the adoption of the motion to accept the report from the Secretary of State pursuant to the provisions of Article IV, Section 4 of the Nebraska Constitution. All those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. The motion is adopted. Mr. Clerk, you're recognized for any message or reports or announcements.

**CLERK:** Thank you, Mr. President. First of all, Committee on Committees will meet in one hour. Committee on Committees will meet on-- Senator Hilkemann, shall we say 2:30?

**HILKEMANN:** That's fine.

**CLERK:** OK, 2:30 in Room 1524. Committee on Committees, 2:30, 1524. Announcements with respect, Senator-- the Banking Committee, is chaired by Senator Williams, will have an Executive Session tomorrow

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Floor Debate January 6, 2021

in Room 1507 at 1:30. That's Banking Committee tomorrow at 1:30. And Mr. President, I have nothing further. I have a priority motion. Senator Cavanaugh would move to adjourn the body until Thursday morning, January 7, at 10:00 a.m.

**FOLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk. Members, the motion is to adjourn. Those in favor say aye. Those opposed say nay. We are adjourned.