

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee February 16, 2022

BREWER: [RECORDER MALFUNCTION] The committee. I am Senator Tom Brewer from Gordon, representing the 43rd Legislative District and I serve as the Chair of this committee. The committee will take up bills in the order they are posted on the agenda. Our hearing today is your public part of the legislative process. This is your opportunity to express your position on proposed legislation before us today. Committee members may come and go during the hearing. This is part of the process, we have bills to introduce in other committees. I know Senator Halloran and Senator Hunt both have bills this afternoon. Do not panic if you see us on electronic devices, we're going to get notified if we have to go to a different committee through either a computer or a phone. I ask that you abide by the following procedures here today to better facilitate our proceedings. Please silence or turn off any cell phones or electronic devices. Please move to the reserved chairs when you're ready to testify. The chairs in the front row are reserved for that. Introducer will make the initial statement, followed by proponents, opponents and then those in the neutral. Closing remarks are reserved for the introducing senator. If you're planning to testify, please pick up a green sign-in sheet that is on the back table. Please fill out the sheet completely. We'd ask that you print and make sure that you have it ready when you come up to give to either the page or the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify, but would like to have a record of your presence here for the hearing, there's a white sheet in the back that you can fill out also. If you have handouts, please make sure you have at least 10 copies and give them to the page when you come up to testify. They will take care of distributing to the committee. If you do not have enough copies, let a page know and they can make copies for you. When you come to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone, tell us your name, and then please spell both your first and last name to ensure an accurate record. We will be using the light system here for testifiers. You will have-- how many are planning to testify here today? Oh, we'll go five minutes. Um, you have five minutes to make your remarks to the committee. When you see the yellow light, that gives you a warning that you have one minute remaining. When the red light comes on, you need to complete your [RECORDER MALFUNCTION]

BLOOD: The western half of Bellevue and parts of Papillion, Nebraska.

McCOLLISTER: John McCollister, District 20, central Omaha.

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Rita Sanders representing District 45, the Bellevue/Offutt community.

M. HANSEN: Matt Hansen, District 26 in Lincoln.

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LOWE: John Lowe, District 37, Kearney, Gibbon and Shelton.

HALLORAN: Steve Halloran, District 33. Adams, Phelps and Kearney County.

BREWER: Legal Counsel, Dick Clark, committee clerk, Julie Condon. Pages today are Sylvia and Morgan in the back. All right. With that, we will go ahead and start on our first bill of the day, LB927 [SIC LB928]. Senator Sanders, welcome to your Government Committee.

SANDERS: Good afternoon. Good afternoon, Chairman Brewer and committee members. For the record, my name is Rita Sanders, R-i-t-a S-a-n-d-e-r-s, and I represent District 45 which includes much of the Bellevue/Offutt community here in eastern Sarpy County. Today, I'm introducing LB928 to require closed caption on certain political advertisements. LB928 requires-- requires candidates for state offices or any respect of community supporting said candidate to include closed captioning on the video advertisement or to include a transcript of their advertisement on the candidates or committee's website. I'd like to thank the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for bringing me this bill. I feel-- I feel very close to this bill. I have a 38-year-old good-looking single son [LAUGHTER] that-- that is hearing impaired. I also want to thank Carter Communications and the Nebraska Broadcasting Association for working with us to develop AM1863. This amendment is a white copy amendment that would replace the bill. It is simply is-- and it simply clarifies that candidates and committees are responsible for fulfilling this requirement, not the video platform it is shown on. You may find the list of elective offices-- you may find the list of elected offices this would apply to on page 1 of the amendment, lines 8 through 13. These are all either statewide offices or statewide bodies. These advertisements could include anything from traditional TV advertisements to a Facebook video. To be clear, this requires closed caption, not open caption. That means the listener must push a closed caption button on their remote or on their computer or phone to see the subtitles. And again, the candidate or committee's can satisfy this requirement by having a transcript of these advertisements available on their website. I bring this bill simply for campaign accessibility, but also for transparency. Our deaf and hard of hearing community should be able to participate in our elections and with this small, cost free way to help. Today, you will hear from John Wyvill, executive director of the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Mr. Wyvill can help explain the genesis of this bill. You will also hear from Frank Daley, the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure.

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Finally, I ask that the committee advance LB928, along with AM1863, which should be here shortly and I'd be happy to take any questions.

BREWER: Thank you. AM1863 is the white copy?

SANDERS: Yes, and my legislative aide emailed it to all of you.

BREWER: Oh, OK. All right. Questions for Senator Sanders. Well, you must have done a good job opening. Thank you. All right. First proponents to LB928. Welcome to the Government Committee.

JOHN WYVILL: Good afternoon, Chairman Brewer and members of the committee. My name is John, J-o-h-n, Wyvill, W-y-v-i-l-l. I am the executive director for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I am here today on behalf of my full board to express our full support for LB928 and our gratitude for Senator Sanders for introducing a bill that will include greater transparency and access for deaf and hard of hearing individuals throughout the state and certainly to define what the candidates stand for in political ad. We are handing out the we-- the letters of support, one from on behalf of my full board, one from the Nebraska Association from the Deaf and the other from the Hearing Loss Association of America, Omaha chapter, which represent the two statewide organizations that represent deaf and hard of hearing committee-- community in support of this bill. And this bill, we believe will have greater accountability in terms of giving informed choices and access for where the candidates stand on certain issues, and I am here to answer any questions that you may have about the bill.

BREWER: All right, thank you for that testimony. Let's see if we have questions for you. All right, Jim, thank you for this. It's very good.

JOHN WYVILL: Thank you very much, Senator.

BREWER: OK, next, proponent. Sir, welcome back to the Government Committee.

FRANK DALEY: Thank you very much, Chairman Brewer and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Frank Daley, D-a-l-e-y. I serve as the executive director of the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission, and I'm here today to express the commission's support for LB928. The commission considers itself to be primarily in the information business. That is, we gather information found in campaign statements and make that information available to the public and to the media. And that's part of the process by which voters make determinations about the candidates. As

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we're in the process of developing our new website, one of the prime considerations is ensuring that it's done in a way that the information is accessible to people of differing abilities. By the same token, what candidates say about themselves is probably the most important thing in evaluating a candidate. And it seems to me that LB928 is a very simple and reasonable way by which more voters can perceive what the candidates are saying in their ads. So thank you very much for the opportunity to testify and thank you, Senator Sanders, for bringing this bill.

BREWER: All right. Thank you, Frank. Let's see if we've got questions for you. Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Daley, in your knowledge of candidates and elections, will this end up being burdensome to candidates, do you think?

FRANK DALEY: I would think not. And there are a couple of reasons why. Number one, I think adding closed captioning is relatively cheap these days. And even if someone didn't want to do that, one of the options is to place that information on the candidate's website. If you look at the list of candidates that are affected by this bill, it's primarily the constitutional officers and candidates that sit on statewide boards or legislative bodies. And most of those folks are going to have websites or they're not going to be running TV and radio ads. So I don't think it's going to be much of a factor one way or another.

McCOLLISTER: Do you think it would provide greater accountability because some of the ads would include the message itself?

FRANK DALEY: I do. It just seems to me that the more people that are able to perceive what the candidate is saying in an ad, the better informed we are, the better the process is in our elections.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you.

BREWER: Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you. Chairman Brewer. How are you today, Frank?

FRANK DALEY: I am fine, Senator. I hope you're the same.

BLOOD: I am. One of my favorite state employees. Hey-- hey, everybody's got favorites. So here-- first of all, I think it's a great idea. Not against society at all. But here's the question I have

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for you, and I think you can better answer this than Senator Sanders. So now in social media, a lot of people do like video chats where they're answering like a question that they've been asked maybe on the campaign trail or they've seen something in the news that they just want to kind of respond to. And you still say at the end of those videos, even though they're not really ads, you know, paid for by Carol Blood for Queen or whatever. And so where do we-- I mean, is that considered an ad and if so, so when we're doing that with like a smartphone, it's not professional, but it's a video and it's considered an ad because we have to put our-- our-- our disclaimer on it. Where do we draw the line or is it that that has to be produced too if we put that on our website? I mean, we could do like 100 of them in a year.

FRANK DALEY: Sure. Well, it seems to me that a video chat is not typically an ad. It's more of a current conversation, wouldn't you say?

BLOOD: I mean, you're not really talking one on one, though, it's a video that you're posting.

FRANK DALEY: Oh, I see what you mean. So you're posting a video of maybe a town hall meeting or something about--

BLOOD: No, more like, say-- say that I'm campaigning for something and I get asked the same question over and over again by people like, why can't dogs drive cars and all, and assuming asked that another hundred times, I'll say, hey, I've been asked a lot about why dogs can't drive cars and here's my answer.

FRANK DALEY: Uh-huh.

BLOOD: And then you put it on social media and on Twitter, and you put it on your Facebook page and you never have to answer the question again, hopefully. So-- but that's not really an ad, we still have to put a disclaimer on it.

FRANK DALEY: OK. Actually, you bring up a good point that I haven't thought of, which is why it's good to talk with the candidate once in a while. I think that-- that's probably something would need to be fleshed out through commission rules and regs to clarify what constitutes an ad for the purposes of this permission.

BLOOD: OK, I appreciate that that's the only concern I have reading through this several times is, I don't see the opening for that and we see a lot of that nowadays.

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FRANK DALEY: We do.

BLOOD: All right. Thank you.

FRANK DALEY: You're welcome, Senator.

BREWER: All right. Additional questions for Frank? All right, thank you, sir.

FRANK DALEY: Thank you, members of the committee.

BREWER: OK, next proponent to LB928. Is there anyone here in opposition? Oh yeah, yeah, I got a proponent. Good. I was giving you the crazy look there when I thought you were--

WESTIN MILLER: As you should. Senator Brewer, members of the committee, my name is Westin Miller, W-e-s-t-i-n M-i-l-l-e-r. I'm the director of public policy at Civic Nebraska. Nothing profound to add. Just wanted to thank Senator Sanders for, I think, finding one of the few remaining areas touching politics or campaigns. It's not like highly controversial and painful, so this seems like a slam dunk and we are happy to support it. We would certainly encourage campaigns to-- to do both options, both the transcript on the website and the captions.

BREWER: Right. That makes me feel much better than I thought you were coming in opposition on this one.

WESTIN MILLER: Drama.

BREWER: You were just a little slow getting up so I'm already shifting gears. All right. Questions for Westin? All right. Thanks for coming up and testifying. All right. We'll stay with proponents just a hair longer in case there is anyone else. Seeing none, we'll go to opponents and anybody here in the neutral. We will welcome Senator Sanders back for a closing.

SANDERS: Thank you, Chairman Brewer, thank you, committee. Senator Blood, we will address your question. I-- I know if you put your video on YouTube, YouTube can put the closed caption on there for you. That's the spoken language. I think if you want to add, paid for by-- that might be considered not a closed caption, but an open caption.

BREWER: OK. Questions? Senator Blood.

BLOOD: I don't want to speak back--

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BREWER: No, no, you're-- roll on.

BLOOD: So there's so many different facets of social media, be it Twitter, be it Facebook. And I do feel that there's a hole in this language that we should maybe talk to Frank about. I think this is a great idea, but it doesn't cover every type of video that you're going to utilize for your campaign from Instagram. Right? We know that-- and we know how many people in our body will be doing something and-- and videotape it, and then they have to put a disclaimer if they're running. So I think that we have to fix that hole. And I think it's going to be an easy fix when you get Frank involved.

SANDERS: Thank you for that question and it is something we need to look at. Technology and communication is a growing area, so we will-- we will dig into that. Thank you. Yes.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah. I was just wondering when you plan to define what communication is, so would that be something that comes before the bill moves to General File? Or are you going to wait for commission rulings on what constitutes communication?

SANDERS: I think I will visit with Frank Daley on that.

McCOLLISTER: All right.

SANDERS: Thank you.

BREWER: So we'll probably have an amendment to kind of tweaks in the language. All right. I'm just going to throw an idea out there. I don't mean to seem bossy, but I am. You have-- this is a little premature, but you have no one in the neutral, you have no one in opposition, you had no one speak in opposition, this is a bill that is really kind of prime for consent calendar. But unless you do a letter and drop it by noon tomorrow, you won't be eligible. I think there's a pretty good chance that we can work out the language and that way we could expedite a consent calendar on this. So if you would want to do that, I would talk to the Speaker and let him know that we're working on an amendment. Don't see any issues, but we've met the timeline. So that would just be a recommendation I think.

SANDERS: I appreciate that. Thank you, Chairman Brewer.

BREWER: OK, any other questions? Again, there are zero neutral, zero in opposition and three in support of LB928. So if there's no other questions, thank you.

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SANDERS: I would like to say on last note is the other night my husband and I were watching TV with my hearing-impaired son and we had a political ad with closed caption on it, and it's done both of them to see there was a political ad with closed caption, and my husband uses closed caption all the time now. He's not hearing impaired, he's just aging. So I think it's going to be useful for so many people, especially with the Baby Boomers. Thank you.

BREWER: All right. Thank you. All right. We'll make a quick change over here. And our next bill will be LB908, and we will welcome Senator McDonnell to the Government Committee.

McDONNELL: Thank you, Chairperson Brewer and members of the committee. My name is Mike McDonnell, M-i-k-e M-c-D-o-n-n-e-l-l, represent Legislative District 5, south Omaha. I'm here today to introduce LB908. LB908 was brought to me by Douglas County Board of Commissioners. I know this committee engaged in amending the Open Meetings Act last session with LB83. I believe LB908 would provide the logical exception to the Open Meetings Act. LB908 would all allow public bodies to hold virtual meetings when the public meeting is a non-action meeting. While I'm sure many public bodies would prefer the Open Meetings Act allow for all public meetings to be virtual, LB908 is a narrow exception to allow a virtual option. COVID accelerated the use of virtual meetings and the Douglas County Board has shared with me that the virtual option has provided for more community engagement and more coverage by media outlets. This county board has a very transparent committee structure. The committee structure of the board includes all seven commissioners. Occasionally, a committee will meet with a limited and informational agenda and there will-- will not be a quorum. Because of the lack of quorum, the meeting may not take place. LB908 would provide an efficient way to meet the quorum. Second, the board would like to hold a informational pre-board meeting on the Monday before Tuesday morning board meetings. This meeting is purely informational and there are no action items. Last, the committee meeting can be scheduled for commissioners to share information with the public. Being able to hold these virtual-- virtually, would allow the board to engage with the public in the media. For these instances, the board would take advantage of the provisions of LB908. I'd like to highlight the transparent format of the Douglas County Board. All committees subject themselves to the Open Meetings Act. There is not any committee meetings discussing policy that are not subject to the Open Meetings Act. All committee and board meetings-- meetings are open to the public, underscoring the transparency. All board meetings and committee meetings are video recorded and posted to the Douglas County website. There could be an alternate-- alternative to the less

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transparent ways to solve the issue the board faces, but the board would prefer this limited exception in the statute. Last there is an amendment, AM1950 as provided to the committee. This amendment is to ensure the bill language in LB908 does not impact the virtual meetings currently taking place under the Open Meetings Act. This should alleviate concerns brought to our attention by public power and the Nebraska Bar Association. Transparency builds trust. The idea of trying to make it more convenient and what we've all gone through in the last few months using technology, we-- that's what we're trying to do, but we're not trying to take away that transparency from the-- with the public, but we are trying to make it more convenient. Questions?

BREWER: All right. Thank you for that opening. Let's see if we have questions for you. Questions on LB908? All right, you're going to stick around for closing?

McDONNELL: Yeah, I'll stick around. Thank you.

BREWER: All right. We will start with proponents to LB908. Welcome to the Government Committee.

MARY ANN BORGESON: Afternoon, thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Mary Ann Borgeson and I am the chairperson of the Douglas County Board of Commissioners. I am here to testify in support of LB908, a bill that would provide the opportunity for public bodies to conduct virtual meetings.

BREWER: Mary Ann, could we have you spell your name?

MARY ANN BORGESON: Oh yes, I'm sorry. Mary Ann Borgeson, M-a-r-y A-n-n, Borgeson, B-o-r-g-e-s-o-n.

BREWER: Thank you.

MARY ANN BORGESON: Like many other public bodies in the state, the Douglas County Board has formed committees of the full board so that the board can discuss but not take action on issues of public concern outside of our regularly scheduled county board meetings. The Douglas County Board's committees are human resources, finance, health and human services, community services and administrative services. And again, we as seven commissioners sit as the full committee. These committee meetings, which are fully subject to the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, are important in that they provide the opportunity for the commissioners to vet certain matters before they are presented to the county board at our regularly scheduled Tuesday board meetings.

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This allows the board to appropriately manage the length of our regular meetings as well. Without committee meetings, the board meetings would be significantly longer, potentially preventing members of the public from being present for a particular topic about which they have vested interest or about which they are generally concerned. I would like to emphasize that the county board does not take any action at these committee meetings. That the notice of the meetings are published in The Daily Record. They are recorded and they are online, and the members of the public are given the opportunity to speak while they are online as well. There are occasions, particularly now, while we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, that a member or members of the board cannot be physically present at one of these committee meetings. If for some reason a majority of our board is unable to be physically present, then that meeting cannot be held. This bill would allow for those commissioners to be present via Zoom or another web-based program and to fully participate in the meeting. Given the prolific-- prolific volition-- proliferation of the online meetings, particularly since the onset of the pandemic, there is simply no sufficient reason why this meeting cannot be held virtually, particularly with no action that will be taken. There are safeguards built into LB908 to ensure members of the public can attend and participate in the meeting. LB908, as written, requires the public body again to publish the notice of the meeting, including the dial-in number or the link to the virtual meeting. The bill also requires the public body to provide a physical site to accommodate members of the public who want to attend the meeting in person rather than virtually. Further, members of the public are afforded an opportunity to comment or ask questions, at least to the same extent as they would be as if they were in person. For the above-stated reason, the Douglas County Board respectfully request that this committee vote to approve LB908 for the-- and present it to the full Unicameral. I thank you for your time and I would take any questions.

BREWER: All right. Thank you, Mary Ann. And you did a much better job of explaining it than Senator McDonnell did. [LAUGHTER] All right, questions? Senator Sanders.

SANDERS: Good afternoon, Commissioner Borgeson.

MARY ANN BORGESON: Hello, hello.

SANDERS: Would you think this process would allow more people to attend with-- would the base be broader for that communication in that conversation?

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MARY ANN BORGESON: Yes, ma'am. We actually found that during COVID, when we did hold even our county board meetings were via Zoom and we actually began to see much more participation. And even today we're continuing the Zoom meetings for the county board meetings. But yes, even in our committee meetings, there is much more public participation. Absolutely.

BREWER: Oh, Senator-- I'm sorry,

McCOLLISTER: Thank you.

BREWER: Senator McCollister, go ahead.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to see you, Commissioner.

MARY ANN BORGESON: You too.

McCOLLISTER: So would the public participation be open-ended or would they be obligated to pre-register in order to-- to provide comments or questions?

MARY ANN BORGESON: No, they're-- the link is given and then they during a Zoom meeting, you can raise your hand if you would like to ask a question or comment during any of the process of the meeting.

McCOLLISTER: So it's normal to Zoom format?

MARY ANN BORGESON: Yep, yep.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you.

BREWER: Additional questions? All right. Thank you for your testimony.

MARY ANN BORGESON: Thank you,

BREWER: Senator McKinney threw me off when he came in, so I missed your-- missed your hand there. Next proponent. Welcome to the Government Committee.

CANDACE BERENS: Thank you. Good afternoon, Senator Brewer and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Candace Berens, C-a-n-d-a-c-e B-e-r-e-n-s. I'm appearing before the committee in my capacity as a deputy county attorney on behalf of the Lancaster County Board of County Commissioners. I'm here to testify on behalf of the board in support of LB908. Each Tuesday morning the county board conducts its regular meeting. These regular meetings are weekly and are the county's business meetings where most of the

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county's contracts are approved, resolutions are adopted, public hearings are conducted, and other final actions are taken. At each of its regular business meetings the board provides time for public comment regarding nonagenda items and for public participation on agenda items. In addition to its regular business meetings, the board conducts weekly staff meetings each Thursday. These staff meetings largely consist of internal and external stakeholders briefing the board regarding items that are scheduled to appear on an upcoming Tuesday business meeting. LB908 complements the board's current practice of dividing discussion and briefings from formal debate and action. However, the flexibility afforded by LB908 would allow the board to conduct more timely and more frequent discussions and briefings with stakeholders, increasing the board's accessibility to its constituents. At the same time, LB908 ensures the openness and transparency that is the hallmark of the Open Meetings Act. Consistent with the rules applicable to other public bodies who conduct virtual meetings subject to the Open Meetings Act, LB908 requires that a link to the virtual meeting be provided to all members of the public to ensure viewing and participation, and that the virtual meeting be recorded. In addition, LB908 ensures equal access by requiring that a physical meeting site be maintained. LB908's approach to conducting virtual meetings is consistent with the county board's prior operations under the Governor's executive order temporarily allowing for virtual meetings during the height of the pandemic. And the county board believes that LB908 wisely builds upon that prior experience. LB908's common sense approach will improve the county board's flexibility to conduct the business of the county, while also increasing constituent access to the county board. Combined with the access already provided to the public at the county board's regular business meetings at which formal action takes place, including the opportunity for public comment and the opportunity to address the board on any item on the agenda, the county board believes LB908's provisions will well-serve both the operations of government and the interest of public. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and I would be happy to answer any questions you have.

BREWER: All right, thank you for your testimony. Questions? All right. Thank you for coming in today.

CANDACE BERENS: You're welcome.

BREWER: All right. Additional proponents to LB908. Beth, welcome back.

BETH BAZYN FERRELL: Thank you. Good afternoon, Chairman Brewer, members of the committee. For the record, my name is Beth, B-e-t-h, Bazyn, B-a-z-y-n, Ferrell, F-e-r-r-e-l-l. I'm with the Nebraska

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Association of County Officials and I'm appearing in support of LB908. We'd like to thank Senator McDonnell for introducing this bill and providing the amendment for clarification. As Commissioner Borgeson and Ms. Berens explained, this bill really does provide another tool for counties. It provides some flexibility, but it also has safeguards in place to make sure that meetings would be transparent if they're held virtually. There are provisions for notice and accommodating the public's right to hear and participate. So again, we think this will be a helpful tool. I'd be happy to answer questions.

BREWER: All right. Questions for Beth. Thank you for your testimony. All right. Additional proponents to LB908. Opponents to LB908? Oh, OK. Neutral? Senator McDonnell, welcome back.

McDONNELL: Thank you. You're also correct, Senator Brewer. Commissioner Borgeson adds intelligence and class to this bill, and I appreciate her being here and others to testify today. As far as I know, you have no letters of opposition. Before I say that too loud, I hope that's factual. I would like you to please consider possibly Exec on this as soon as possible, and it could-- if we could move it along if you're in agreement, we could look at consent calendar.

BREWER: All right. Actually, we got zero in the neutral, one in opposition and one proponent. But I don't know, you may want to call the opposition and they might be confused, I don't know.

McDONNELL: I will definitely work on calling the opposition and others behind me will, I'm certain before-- before we speak tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.

BREWER: All right. Well, you get-- get the letter ready. It's due by noon tomorrow, but you-- we'll share this with you, all right. OK, any-- any questions for Mike before he heads out? All right. Thank you.

McDONNELL: Thanks.

BREWER: All right. We'll have a pause here while we switch out. We'll let them herd out just a bit longer here, so it quiets down a little bit. And doing musical chairs for you here. I think it'll slow down. Yeah. Come on forward if you're going to testify on LB1205. Grab a seat up close. Make it easier to get to the-- to the chair to testify. We didn't want to start without you, John.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah.

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BREWER: All right. We'll go ahead and keep going here. Our next bill is LB1205 and we will welcome Senator McKinney. Welcome to the Government Committee.

McKINNEY: Thank you, Chairman Brewer and members of the Government, Military and Veteran Affairs Committee. We're here today to discuss LB1205, which would provide powers and duties for the State Nebraska Historical Society and provide for the development of the Ernie Chambers History, Arts and Humanities Museum. Regardless of how many have felt about Senator Chambers throughout his time in the Legislature, the lasting comment that I always receive is that I respected him and I understood what he was doing. I decided to bring this bill because I felt it was important to begin honoring his legacy-- legacy now. Often, society waits until someone is no longer with us to honor someone or give them their flowers. Senator Ernie Chambers was first elected to the Legislature in 1970 and served continued-- continuously. Since then-- since then, once the Constitution was changed with the four-- with the four-year hiatus. He represented District 11 honestly, fearlessly and well. He also is the longest serving state senator in Nebraska history. Senator Chambers authored many bills, including bills which abolished the death penalty, require district elections at the county, city and school board levels. Divest in Nebraska investments from apartheid in South Africa. Returned Native American artifacts held by the state of Nebraska to Native American people. Restored family rights to the Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Act. Established a new DNA trial right that helped-- it freed many that could be exonerated like the Beatrice Six. Prohibiting corporal punishment of children at schools, established a publicly funded and medically approved diet for kids on welfare. Established a learning community. Help eliminate disparities in public education and resources and protected the environment and wildlife living in Nebraska. To put it simply, he-- he set a standard for honesty, fair--fair-- he set a standard for being honest, fearless, selfless, intelligent, informed public service that would inspire future generations and teach such generations how to serve and to prever-- and preserve our state, democratic-- our democratic state. I don't know what's wrong with me today, but you know, honestly, I think Senator Chambers personified the principle that the salvation of the state is in a watchful eye of the citizen, which is why I believe we must preserve his legacy and life's work at the Ernie Chambers History in Arts and Humanities Museum for future generations of Nebraska-- Nebraskans and those that might travel from across the country or the globe. Our youth, especially youth in my district, are in need of hope and examples of other ways to direct their energy. This can also serve-- this can serve that purpose and also serve as an

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attraction to attract business and begin to change the negative perspectives of north Omaha that have persisted for decades. Senator Chambers is-- isn't one for accolades or patting himself on the back, but even so, I believe in the vision of this project and a potential impact that it can have on our state, which is why I ask that you move this forward out of committee. Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you, Senator McKinney. All right. Questions? I have one. Do you know if-- if you were to go nationwide and look at who's the longest serving senator, how would he have ranked nationwide? I mean, surely he'd have to be in the top.

McKINNEY: I was having a conversation with his daughter the other day, and I believe he should be in the top five nationwide.

BREWER: Wow. OK. One more time, no questions? You'll stick around to close?

McKINNEY: Yes.

BREWER: All right. Thank you. OK, we will start with proponents to LB1205. Welcome to the Government Committee.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: All right. First, first, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today representing Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanity Museum. Together We Achieved Miracle, would especially like to thank Senator Brewer and this committee for a historical opportunity. Together We Achieved Miracle, a nonprofit organization since 1999, is here to speak on why we feel Senator McKinney's bill, LB1205, is a histo-- is historical and-- and we support-- and we support this bill. I am Gayla Lee Chambers, the oldest child and only daughter of Senator Ernie Chambers and the president of Together We Achieved Miracles, Inc. (SIC) My father, who has served 46 years, is no stranger to this-- to the walls of Nebraska State Capitol. My siblings, children and I always joked around about when he would retire, but the passion my father has for spreading the truth and finding ways to help and educate the community is too powerful. He also a workaholic, and you all know that, but that's beside the point. His words, his originality and his dedication toward helping those who are underserved are too powerful as well. I asked my father who he is as a person, and he said the three "L" stands for least, last, lost. The people who have the least, the people who are last and the people who are lost. He is a man who is of the people, by the people and for the people. I am here in this building standing in front of this committee and asking the state of Nebraska to partner with the preservation of my father's political legacy. The exact same

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building you are sitting in that my father dedicated half of his life working in for 46 years. There are people who agree with his work. There are people who disagree with his work. But one thing both sides can't deny is the value of his life's work and how he has made significant changes in the State Capitol, the city of Omaha, in the state of Nebraska and the impact nationally-- nationally and globally for his work here at the State Capitol in Nebraska. We want something that would truly represent who my father is, not only as a former state senator, but as an overall person. You know, my-- you know, Ernie Chambers' political career. I know my father's heart. So I decided to combine his political career passion with knowledge, history, education and his passion for the arts. Ernie Chambers History-Art-Humanity Museum would be-- would be an historical landmark for not only the community he grew up in, but for the state of Nebraska and beyond. Ernie Chambers History-Art-Humanity Museum is an excellent representation of what my father is passionate about. Yes, he is more known for his political side, but my father has an artistic side that we want also to highlight in a unique way. This museum would be for public viewing for his life work through the Ernie Chambers library, but also for research purpose, education, theater, performing arts, music, dance, cautionary special events and for all of those who just want to learn more about history and the arts. We are turning a two-story, 58,000 square foot building, 100-year old building into a historical landmark, which will be in the heart of north Omaha, right in his hometown in his political District 11. And I hope you all had an opportunity to review the rendering of the Ernie Chambers History-Art-Humanity Museum, created by Ali Poyner and Nikado firm and myself. The building sits on a historic ground, and because of that, it already has many stories to tell. But we are not here just to continue someone else's story, we are using the same fundamental book to start a new chapter, to tell a new story and to bring a positive, monumental transformation for the state of Nebraska, north Omaha youth and generations to come. I am so proud of my father and all his work he has done serving as the longest state senator for 46 years in north Omaha in Nebraska. His hard-earned work will not go unnoticed, his story will be heard. When you plant a seed you water the seed and something incredible blossom. My father work is that seed. He watered his work with dedication, truth and passion. And from that dedication, truth and passion, new ideal blossom and new ideal will be shined upon. Let's come together as a team and continue to water this new ideal because together we can achieve miracles. This multicultural center is a safe place that will grow and be recognized for all over because when you believe, when you believe in something and have the right resources, prosperity arises. Prosperity arises. Senators, we will shine together. And why? Because Ernie Chambers is the first in

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Nebraska to hold the longest political position, 46 years. He is my father, Ernie Chambers, and he is in the top of the United States of America as part of the longest held position as a public service. Thank you all for your time.

BREWER: Thank you. You are on such a roll there I didn't want to interrupt you. Could we have you spell your name just so we have it in the record?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Yes. G-a-y-l-a, Lee-Chambers, L-e-e-C-h-a-m-b-e-r-s.

BREWER: All right. Thank you. Thank you for that opening. All right. Questions? Yes, Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thank you. The fruit doesn't fall far from the tree.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Thank you so much. Thank you, sir.

LOWE: I had flashbacks there for a minute. [LAUGHTER]

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: I hope it was good ones.

LOWE: My day was not complete until your father yelled at me at least one time. And how is your father doing? I haven't seen him in a while.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: He's doing great. I'm keeping him very busy

LOWE: In his art? Does he continue to draw?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Oh, my God, he's got so much art. Yes, he's-- yeah, he hasn't continued as of today, but his granddaughter is kind of taking that place because she's very artistic.

LOWE: I-- he used to sit next to me in many committee hearings, and he would put two dots on a piece of paper this size.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Oh.

LOWE: And it was fun watching that develop. It would develop into an incredible sketch. I miss those days.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Thank you. I'll let him know that.

LOWE: All right. Thank you very much.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Thank you so much.

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BREWER: Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Yes. Has he found a legislative district to run in?
[LAUGHTER]

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Oh, boy, I don't-- no. This is it. This is it. This is what he's going to be running in. That building is pretty big, so we'll keep him running pretty fast in that building. The black logs.

BREWER: I guess I got a quick question for you.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Yes, sir.

BREWER: Ernie never wanted attention for anything. I'm guessing you came up with this idea, not Senator Chambers?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: You know, he's just a humble person. We-- and to answer your question, no, it was all my ideal from the very beginning for many, many years ago. I knew that this day would come and I knew what I would have to take the forefront and run because my dad, my father, just a humble person, he wouldn't want a credit for anything of his work at all.

BREWER: And I'm guessing that he's probably got enough stuff around to fill it.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Oh my gosh. That's what worries me. He has a-- his home is filled with-- to the ceiling with his historical archives. And that's what worries me.

BREWER: Well, all right. Senator Lowe.

LOWE: One more. I did not catch the address of the building.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Yes, it's at 4401 North 21st Street in Omaha.

LOWE: And when is the expected opening?

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Well, we're open now, semi, and we're doing our-- our media center is open where he does a lot of his shows on it.

LOWE: OK.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: But we're not really open to the public more or less.

LOWE: OK, thank you.

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BREWER: All right. Any additional questions? Well, thank you. Thank you for letting us have this kind of a snapshot of our memories of Ernie and so you did a very good job.

GAYLA LEE CHAMBERS: Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Thank you to this committee.

BREWER: All right. Next proponent to LB1205. Welcome to the Government Committee.

LEVELLE WELLS: Thank you for having me. My name is Levelle Wells, L-e-v-e-l-l-e, Wells, W-e-l-l-s. Once again, my name is Levelle Wells. I'm a proud member of Omaha Nation of Nebraska. Together We Achieve Miracle is truly opening doors and creating paths for the people who go unseen and unheard. They are giving me an opportunity to be a leader and to shine my spotlight in my own community so that we can share our own truth and make aware of the untold stories that got left behind in the shadows. My roots and my tribe, my Native American people all represent integrity to come from a long lineage of leaders. Ernie Chambers is a firm representation of its integrity. A leader that has proven that he is for the people who got looked over or pushed aside. It's Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanity Museum is not only a safe place for that people can gather around in, but also a place where the truth will be learned and from their inspiration knowledge will flow through the halls. Today, I'm standing here in support of the LB1205 bill by Senator McKinney. Today, I am standing beside Ms. Gayla Chambers for her father's legacy. Today, tomorrow and the days to come I will forever stand with the power of justice, not only for my people, but for those who don't have a voice. To my Native American people, I'm here to tell you that our voices does matter. Our history is strong and deep rooted. Like Ms. Gayla Chambers said-- has said, a birth-- to birth a new idea you must first plant a seed. The seeds of my peoples have been planted a long time ago. No more will the seeds of our history be kept in the shadows. A new and bright light has come to shine upon our roots. That light is honesty, dedication and resiliency. The shift to a new beginning has arrived. Everyone who wants to see a positive and great change are welcome aboard because to see a change, we have to have people who believe in that change. Support and vote for this historical bill, LB1205. Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you, Mr. Wells. Questions? Senator McCollister.

McCOLLISTER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. In your opening, you use the words unseen and unheard. That's not words I usually associate with Senator Chambers. Thank you.

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LEVELLE WELLS: Thank you.

BREWER: Questions? Before you go, I got to share something with you. Senator Chambers was incredibly helpful with anything Native American-related. And the first year I was here, I-- I brought him a Tomahawk as a gift, with handmade one that-- there are certain things that he seemed like he appreciated. And because this was handmade, not a store "boughten" kind of thing, I figured it was something he would take and appreciate. And he did. Where it came back to be somewhat of an issue was the last day he was here in the Legislature, he gave a speech and part of that speech was he had brought the Tomahawk with him onto the floor. He had it wrapped in some, some buckskin. And when he got to the point of the speech where he decided he was going to display this, he held it up on the floor. Now we're not supposed to bring things for display on the floor and especially very sharp objects, but at that point he really didn't care anymore. [LAUGHTER] He served his time. It wasn't like the Speaker who was Jim Scheer, who-- who was in an absolute look of horror and talked to me later about why I give out gifts like that. But he-- he treasured that and-- and just-- I thought I would share with you that that was one of the things that we kind of had as a special friendship, is that I shared that with him and he put it on display the last day he was here.

LEVELLE WELLS: He's a great guy.

BREWER: Was, all right, thank you.

LEVELLE WELLS: Thank you. Thank you, guys.

BREWER: OK. We will still be on proponents to LB1205. Welcome to the Government Committee.

PAULINE DULANG: Hello, thank you. Now this is a really short chair. Hello, my name is Pauline, that's P-a-u-l-i-n-e, Dulang, D-u-l-a-n-g, and I'm here in support of LB1205. Access. That is a word that I want you to remember. And I'm going to test how good your memory is and where is access? I'm originally from Canada. I grew up in Miami since I was six years old, and now I studied journalism at the University of Nebraska-Omaha. My pastor says that oftentimes your greatest pain leads to your greatest purpose and I couldn't agree any more. When I moved here three years ago, my family and I were having a very difficult time financially, and on top of that, it was one of the worst recorded winters in history. And every polite conversation I've had with a Nebraskan was always about the weather and potholes, and we didn't really talk about those things in Miami because it was just warm all the time there. But my biggest pet peeve when people tell me

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or when I tell people here that I'm from the Sunshine State is when their knee jerk reaction is, oh, I'm so sorry, you moved here. Why did you do that? Move to Nebraska, Pauline, people are trying to leave this place. Now, remember when bitcoin started around 2009-ish and we thought that anybody who invested in that stuff was like, weird. I did, at least. Yeah, well, those people are incredibly rich now. They saw early potential in their investment, an investment that came so out of left field for most of us. And I'm still trying to grapple with why people are paying millions for intangible art and NFTs. 2009 bitcoin was a silent bomb of potential that ultimately exploded on nuclear levels. And from what I've seen here in Nebraska and actions implemented by Ms. Chambers and the Together We Achieve Miracle team, I think Omaha is bitcoin in 2009. The Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanities Museum is a prime example of a silent bomb that will explode on nuclear levels and is one of the puzzle pieces that can eventually take Nebraska to level-- levels of coast states. Working closely with Ms. Chambers and Together We Achieve Miracle, I've been exposed to more than I could have back at home in Miami. Big cities known to have big opportunities are often overpopulated, and job competition already puts me at a disadvantage. Omaha hits the sweet spot. It has the people and the potential, and you'd almost be a fool for missing out on such an opportunity that will not only foster the existing culture and bring in jobs for students such as myself, but it will bring in students, artists, researchers and just attract people outstate. Now, remember that word that I said earlier-- access. This bill will help do exactly that. Access to resources, access to books, access to culture. Access to a space where young minds such as myself can see themselves reflected. Together We Achieve Miracle has granted me access to the longest state-serving senator, Ernie Chambers, and a reason for a Florida girl to value Nebraska's rich roots. Ernie Chambers is a special character, but no one, whether you're for him or against him, can deny his role and influence in Nebraska Legislature. Now just imagine, like a law student studying here in Nebraska, walking into the Ernie Chambers library, physically holding Ernie Chambers' his work, physically holding history as he or she writes his research paper or their dissertation. And now, since moving here, I haven't met one person who didn't know the name of Ernie Chambers, and you won't find many places that have that first level, of that firsthand access of level. Now, Nebraska, the state's slogan is good life, great opportunity. I had to look that up. So why don't we live up to that state slogan so we don't have to change it again and keep and attract young talent. Thank you for your time.

BREWER: Thank you. All right, questions? One of the things that we were enlightened with every day is Ernie would have a item on our desk

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that usually included art and educated you on some issue. I don't know if anyone ever collected all of those over the years, but it would be a pretty big binder of them and would be a kind of a unique historical perspective because they probably kind of moved with the events of the-- of the country or the world. But I'll be interested to see if anyone ever collected all those because they were educational and humorous and you know, just one of those things that you had to look forward to every morning. All right. Well, thank you for your testimony.

PAULINE DULANG: Thank you.

BREWER: All right. Next, proponent. Welcome to the Government Committee.

MANUEL COOK: All right. Name is Manuel Cook, M-a-n-u-e-l, Cook, C-o-o-k, and I go by Manne and that's M-a-n-n-e. I'm an urban planner and urban developer, among other things. And I can remember back when the building was a library and was just up the street from where I went to daycare. And there's no way for me to fully recognize all that Ernie Chambers has done for black people in north Omaha, the state and beyond, but I'll just mention that he is Nebraska's longest serving state senator, which you've heard, something like the alpha and omega of the Nebraska Legislature. He's an iconic intellectual recognized at home and abroad, a role model. In fact, I'm sure he's been an inspiration to everyone on this committee at some point. He's a people's champion, especially in north Omaha and a defender of the downtrodden. And as you've all heard, he's also an artist. The History-Arts-Humanities Museum itself will entail the preservation of a historic building, maintaining a piece of north Omaha as urban fabric. And it will create a sorely needed place to preserve and showcase art, history, culture and more in north Omaha. Additionally, the building has the potential to function as a human resource center, helping to support basic needs within the community. And once completed, this building will be an important access-point connecting people today and future generations to the community's history and cultural roots. This project will also create benefits for the surrounding area because the Humanities Museum location and function will no doubt act as a strong neighborhood and community anchor and lead to further improvements and investments in the 20th and Ames area, which has the bones to become a strong neighborhood center again. These-- and this will also increase the potential for economic development and tourism in the area. Further, this project aligns with the community's priorities outlined in several planning studies and strategies, and some of those points that I pulled from Forever North

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specifically, like I said, I'm an urban planner, and that is a plan that I worked on in the area is preserving the-- preserving and promoting cultural-- culturally important sites, buildings and residents that maintain the integrity of the African-American experience in utilizing art, history and culture in the area to generate tourism. And I know from my work on other projects that the community wants to see Ernie Chambers recognized more than any other person today. The only person who people mention nearly as much as Ernie Chambers is Malcolm X. I personally support this project and as Urban Development Manager for Spark and director for Fabric Lab, I look forward to further support-- supporting this project as it progresses with the support of my organization. Additionally, I know that many other organizations in north Omaha and across the state are also looking forward to seeing this project progress. This is an important and well-timed bill put forth by Senator McKinney and passing this bill should be a no-brainer, I think. So, I look forward to your unanimous support on this bill and on the floor as well. And now if you will give me another 30 minutes, I have a letter from a friend and a community elder, Preston Love. He wanted to come today, but just couldn't make it down. And his letter reads, my name is Preston Love, Jr. I'm a native Omahan and current-- currently a long-term resident in my beloved north Omaha community. I am a professor at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, Black Studies Department and author and editorial column-- columnist for the World-Herald, and advocate activist for the good of north Omaha community. I come before this committee, a bit-- by writing in strong support of the passage of LB1205 that provides powers and duties to the Nebraska State Legislature Historical Society and provides for the development of the Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanities Museum. Most importantly, I bring to the community my status as a community elder and one who has lived in-- lived and observed the lack and slow economic development within north Omaha and I would ask that you respect the wisdom as it-- as to the needs of my community. At this juncture of time, north Omaha is positioned to finally see economic development and blossom. Our history is full of ups and downs, but has always been a community rich in culture, history and wonderful people. Now is the time to augment economic development with the expression in capturing of our culture in history, arts and humanities. The development of the Ernie Chambers-- Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanities Museum is the right initiative at the right time. I hope that this committee will see the wisdom of my comments. Thank you. And just in time.

BREWER: Yeah, actually, you managed that really well. All right, Manne, hang in. Let's see we got any questions. Senator Blood.

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BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. Manne, it's nice to see you again.

MANUEL COOK: Yeah.

BLOOD: And that's probably the shortest letter I've ever hear from him.

MANUEL COOK: Right, right, yeah.

BLOOD: Just saying. So is the north Omaha legacy tour-- are they going to add this museum on to their legacy tour? Are you aware of whether that's--

MANUEL COOK: I'm sure.

BLOOD: --on the radar?

MANUEL COOK: I'm sure he will. He'll go pretty much anywhere in north Omaha.

BLOOD: That'd be awesome. Thank you.

MANUEL COOK: Yeah.

BREWER: All right. Any additional questions for Manne? Just a quick comment. If you ever watched Senator Chambers on the floor, all the bills, while they initialed the green copy, you wanted to make sure and read, especially if it's your bill before it came up because he would ask you questions on it. And if you didn't have the answers, it was a bad day. [LAUGHTER] He read them and he knew them.

MANUEL COOK: Yeah.

BREWER: And I don't know if he read every bill that ever came before there, but it seemed like he did because he always, always knew if there was a issue or a problem, he found it and you had to answer to it.

MANUEL COOK: Yeah.

BREWER: All right. Thank you.

MANUEL COOK: Yeah.

BREWER: All right. All right. Next proponent. Welcome to the Government Committee.

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MELISSA GENGLER: Thank you. Thanks for the opportunity to support LB1205. My name is Melissa Gengler. M-e-l-i-s-s-a G-e-n-g-l-e-r. I am the president and owner of Historic Resources Group, a woman-owned small business located here in Lincoln. And I'm here to support Gayla in her efforts to renovate the building at 4402 North 20th Street in Omaha. She said earlier it's 4401 North 21st Street. The building is a block long and it faces both 20th and 21st, so we'll have to make sure we have the recognized address correct. This building is in an area formerly known as Saratoga, a community established in 1856 and formed by speculative land developer Erastus Beadle, who was from Saratoga Springs, New York. The building was completed in 1919 for the Imperial Sash and Door Company, who located here because of its proximity to the Beltline Railroad, which ran just along the south side of the building. They went bankrupt in 1932 during the Great Depression, and the property was remodeled then for the Oliver Farm Equipment Company. They manufactured farm equipment in the building until 1956, when Lozier purchased it for their then refrigeration and air conditioning firm. Lozier grew to a national company while in this building, supplying retail fixtures across the country. They expanded to a neighboring property and removed at that time the Ebenezer Baptist Church, which was about one block west. As part of that real estate transaction, Lozier offered to build a new church for the congregation, and while the church was under construction, the congregation worshiped at Lozier's main office. Lozier occupied this building until the 1990s, when they moved to their new Omaha headquarters and of course, still a very active company in Omaha today. So why all this history? This background history speaks to how the building was witness to the esthetic and cultural history of this neighborhood. Its preservation will conserve resources, reduce waste and save money by repairing and reusing the existing building. The efforts here will benefit the economy, the local community and serve as a catalyst for the economic vitality of the area. This is a smart growth strategy that will revitalize this neighborhood. I learned once to consider each neighborhood like a library and each building its own library book. This building tells a story of its own history, but also gets to tell the story of the legacy of an important Nebraskan, Senator Ernie Chambers, through the development of a museum and archive and partnership with History Nebraska. Hopefully, with support, other buildings in this district will be redeveloped to tell their own stories, making this a unique, important and economically viable place in north Omaha. This area has also recently been identified as an economic vitality preservation district by the city of Omaha. Your support for this bill will contribute to building this community, establishing a historical narrative for future generations

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and recognizing the legacy and history of a unique and influential member of our Nebraska and Omaha communities. Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you. All right. Questions? All right.

MELISSA GENGLER: Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you for your time. Next proponent. Welcome to the Government Committee.

JENNIFER HONEBRINK: Thank you. My name is Jennifer Honebrink, J-e-n-n-i-f-e-r, Honebrink, H-o-n-e-b-r-i-n-k. I'm a preservationist and an architect with Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture of Omaha. There are many who are familiar with Ernie Chambers and who can attest to how this project will preserve his legacy for future generations. I want to also ensure that we realize the true value of this project to the north Omaha community. Most of you don't know me, so I'll tell you just a little bit about myself. I have over 20 years of experience in the construction industry, and I have worked on over 90 existing buildings, ranging in scope from the Taylor County Round Barn in Bedford, Iowa, to the School of Natural Resources here in Lincoln, Nebraska. My focus and passion centers on reinvigorating vacant and abandoned structures, helping them to find a second life or third as viable contributors to their communities. Throughout my career, I've watched how the transformation of our older structures always breathed new life into their neighborhoods. When I start a project, the buildings are typically underutilized or even vacant, some for 20 years. Someone, though, looks at that big vacant building and sees potential. They see an opportunity worth taking advantage of, and the really good projects see a good place that's just the right fit for them. While they're busy working on their financial due diligence, I'm busy helping the owner figure out if they can put that 10 pounds into a five-pound container and figuring out what can we cut-- what can we not? Prioritizing which of the building's attributes we need to work around and which we can really capitalize on. When we all come together then that work can really begin. We start to replace those boarded-over windows with well-lit spaces, and we create welcoming places for our community to come together. But it doesn't stop there because once the building is transformed, those renovated spaces draw people in. They then start to use the adjacent services and start to really take advantage of the rest of the neighborhood. And before you know it, that spawns other neighborhood renovations. And that's why rehabilitating buildings like this one that takes that former home of the Imperial Sash and Door Company and turns it into the Ernie Chambers History and Arts Museum, they're critical to our

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neighborhoods. It's more than about just this one building, but it's about the whole neighborhood. Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you. All right. Questions for Jennifer? All right. Thank you for your testimony. All right. Any additional proponents for LB1205? Anybody in opposition? Anybody here in neutral capacity? Welcome back to the Government Committee.

TREVOR JONES: Thanks. Good to see you. Thank you, Senator Brewer and members of the Government and Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Trevor Jones, T-r-e-v-o-r J-o-n-e-s. I'm director and CEO of History Nebraska, the state's historical society. So I'm here testifying in a neutral capacity about this bill, but I am not neutral about Senator Chambers impact on the state of Nebraska or how essential I feel it is to preserve his work and legacy for the future. I have pestered the Senator on several occasions to suggest that his papers, his Ernie grams, and at least some of his trademark sweatshirts are worthy of historical preservation. So the work of his daughter, Gayla, to create the Ernie Chambers History-Arts-Humanities Museum is a worthwhile pursuit and an appropriate way to honor the achievements and values of one of Nebraska's most influential politicians. So my agency has considerable experience with developing and staffing museums, but we've never done a project where the state did not own the facility or the collections, which is my understanding from Senator McKinney that that's the proposal here. We have some enabling statutes that allow us to work with nonprofits, such as our current agreement that we have with the John G. Neihardt Foundation to operate the Neihardt historic site in Bancroft. But in that case, the state still owns the property and we operate the operations under contract. So I'm interested in learning more about how the state could craft the kind of agreement that Senator McKinney and the proponents desire. So museum development, like all project development, has multiple phases. You're working on planning for people, planning for collections, planning for operations and finally planning for the building itself. And once those plans are completed, you can move towards implementation. And then once you've implemented, then you can look at maintenance operation. But everything, the cost, the timeline, the scope, the offerings, all that depend on that initial part of the planning and planning is not inexpensive. The first planning rule of thumb, it may cost you about two percent of the total design budget, but these costs may consume up to a quarter of the budget if you look at schematic design, detailed design, exhibition design and then construction documentation. So my understanding is that Together We Achieve Miracles, Inc. started this process, but I'm not exactly sure at this point, you know, what-- what is needed for my agency to help.

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So LB1205 calls for the development of detailed plans for the project by the end of this calendar year, by the end of 2022. And much depends on the scope and what work has already-- already been completed to whether or not that is achievable. So my agency completed a fiscal note for this bill, which is attached, but depending on the project scope and size, it may require a substantial revision to that document. So I'm happy to take any questions that you may have.

BREWER: All right, thank you, Trevor. Let's see if we have questions for you. All right. Thank you for your testimony.

TREVOR JONES: That's one of my easiest ones, I think.

BREWER: It was. I can't believe it. You got in, you got out. All right. Any additional in neutral? All right. We'll welcome Senator McKinney back. Quick close.

McKINNEY: Thank you, and thank you to everyone that came to testify today, I think, you know, prioritizing and crafting this bill to try to do something to honor the legacy of Senator Ernie Chambers is important. He's my predecessor and I've known of Ernie pretty much my whole life and not because I've met him when I was a kid, just-- by just talking to family and friends throughout life and just them mention him to me and all the great things that he's done, not only for our community but for our state. And I think that it should be a priority for our-- for our state to, you know, enshrine his legacy not-- not just to honor him, but to have a place within our state and in our community where if you're coming from out of state, you can go visit, visit the museum and say, oh, I want to go learn something about Ernie Chambers and the work that he did in the Nebraska State Legislature. I understand there are some technical things we've got to work out with-- with the Nebraska Humanities, but I think it's doable. But I definitely think this is important, you know, bill and thing for our state. And however I could help the committee move this forward and get this out this year, I'll do it. Thank you.

BREWER: Thank you. So it's, I guess, safe to say that you're going to become the bridge between the Nebraska State Historical Society and those that are going to be putting together a museum to kind of work through the--

McKINNEY: Yes.

BREWER: --issues there because I never thought about the fact that that probably is a good example that the Nebraska Historical Society, the state owns the existing facilities that they put stuff in, so.

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McKINNEY: Yeah.

BREWER: We'll have to figure out how to maneuver that.

McKINNEY: Yeah, we've already had conversations about trying to figure out what type of language we need to put together to make it all work. And Gayla and the family have already kind of been working on renderings and some of those things, so a lot of the foot-- foot work has already been taking place.

BREWER: All right. Let's see if we got any-- Senator Lowe.

LOWE: Thanks, Senator Brewer, and thanks, Senator McKinney for bringing the bill. I did keep all of Ernie Chambers grams that he left on our desk for the four years that he and I served together. And it did fill a banker's box, so I can imagine 10 banker's boxes full of Ernie grams sitting around somewhere, that I'm sure your father had somewhere, so.

McKINNEY: Yeah, I know the-- probably the week or so before I came here, I went to-- I was down here for something and I went to the office and it was still filled with stuff and it was like, yeah, I'm going to move it out by the time-- I'm looking, I'm like, how?
[LAUGHTER]

LOWE: I think we all went through that "how"?

BREWER: Maybe it'll be like Pokemon cards, they'll get more valuable over time. All right. Any other questions? All right. Thank you, Senator McKinney.

McKINNEY: Thank you.

BREWER: All right. Now-- and reading the letters, we got zero letters in the neutral, one in opposition, zero proponents and that will close on LB1205. And now we will go to LB930. Well, Senator Hunt, you've got a pretty full room for your bill here.

HUNT: Yeah, people care about this it turns out.

BREWER: Welcome to the Government, your Government Committee.

HUNT: Thank you, Chairman Brewer and my colleagues on the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm Senator Megan Hunt, M-e-g-a-n H-u-n-t, and I'm here today to present LB930. This bill amends the Nebraska Political Accountability and Disclosure Act to allow elected officials to use campaign funds to cover the costs of

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child care and travel for their minor children incurred as part of this official's duties. I first introduced this bill in 2019, colleagues, because when I was elected, I found out that I had a problem. I am a single parent and when I was elected, my kid was just six. And so, you know, of course, I thought about this, but I didn't really realize that I wouldn't be able to use campaign funds for the costs of travel that I incurred during my time as a senator. And so we had a lot of conversations with Frank Daley at the NADC, and we've looked at things happening now in other states since I first introduced this, and I think it's time to try again and get this through. Under current law, office holders may use campaign funds to pay the cost of meals and travel for themselves or their staff, but they cannot use campaign funds to pay for child care needs that arise as part of their service in an elective office or for travel. Legislators have a range of responsibilities that include being present here during session for floor debate and committee hearings, meetings with constituents and traveling to different locations to learn about issues addressed in the Legislature. It's also not uncommon for state senators to serve on committees nationwide and have to travel for those duties. Elected officials with children, especially young children, often need to find child care when they're working away from home in their official capacity. If they can't afford that child care, sometimes it's easier to just buy a plane ticket for the kid and bring them along with you, but that's a cost as well. This is a barrier to many parents and middle- to lower-class income parents, for single parents, and I think that it's a barrier to public service for people who are really dedicated to this work. In 2018, the Federal Election Commission authorized spending for this purpose. And since that time, 15 states have passed similar laws with bipartisan support. I've introduced bills on this topic in the past, and this year I decided to continue to push the issue because it continues to be a huge barrier for parents who are running for office, myself included. When our campaign finance laws in Nebraska were written, it was a different world, and I don't think that lawmakers at the time contemplated single parents or low-income parents in public service. We all know that when we run for office, the rhythms of life are interrupted. And one thing that I really like about this work is that every day it's so different. There's little parts of routine that we have, but no day is ever the same. But as a single parent, I do think that sometimes I have a different experience than some of my colleagues have, whether they have grown children or don't have children or have children with-- in a two-parent household, which is a really different experience than what I have. And this bill has the obvious benefit of leveling the playing field for women who are mothers, but it doesn't just apply to mothers. Of course, dads can use

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this provision too. We know that government has a gender gap problem and a racial inequity problem. This bill would help address one major factor that contributes to systemic inequalities in government that women and especially women of color, are more likely to face barriers to running and are more likely to be single parents. But another inequity we have is that our government skews older. At all levels of government we can see that our officials are disproportionately older than the general population, and that's due to a lot of factors. But one of them is that it's much easier to manage the demands of candidacy in public office if you don't have young children. Of course, there are many elected parents who would not choose to use campaign funds for child care travel. I'll tell you, it's not like I'm going to be paying the daycare every day for four years when I'm down here working. That's not, you know what I'm trying to have happen here. The goal is something more like, you know, tonight I have to go to a dinner to-- to meet with some folks about this new prison that we're talking about, and I'm interested in understanding more about that. So I really need to go so I can make a good decision for my constituents. However, I can't use campaign funds to be-- to pay a babysitter for a couple of hours to make sure that my kid gets dinner. I think that we should allow campaign funds for that use because of the "but for" test. But for my candidacy, but for me being an elected official, I wouldn't have this expense. So for that reason, I think the campaign funds should be allowed to be used for it. Another example I've experienced is, I serve on several committees for the National Council of State Legislatures and for the Council of State Governments, and we have conferences all over the country where I have to go to committee meetings and vote on issues and things like that, particularly over the summer when my child's not in school. It's really disruptive for me to have to make the decision between paying out of pocket with my own funds for my kid to have a plane ticket to come with me or paying out of pocket my own funds for child care for the three days or seven days that I'm going to be gone. It would be so much easier if I could buy my ticket with my campaign funds, buy my child's ticket with my campaign funds, bring them along with me because but for my candidacy, and but for me being an elected official, I would not need to make that expenditure. All of these expenditures would, of course, be accountable to the Accountability and Disclosure Commission. Donors and voters, and everybody would be able to see everything a candidate spends, whether it's on child care or travel or alcohol at Billy's or signs or campaign literature, or whatever it is that you want to spend money on. Nothing in this bill would change that. To me, it makes no sense that I could use my campaign funds to take the entire Legislature out for drinks after this hearing, but I can't use those same funds I worked so hard for to

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bring my kid with me to a Council of State Governments conference that I'm required to attend because I serve on a committee. Right now, I can even take my staff to those events, but I can't bring my kid. As state senators we make \$12,000 a year and that's not a living, and it doesn't come close to covering any of our expenses. Parenting doesn't stop after a candidate is elected. Allowing candidates and elected to consider child care and child travel a campaign expense is one important way to help parents who want to serve the public. The more people are able to run for office, the more our body of elected officials will reflect the population they serve and that's a good thing. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

BREWER: Thank you, Senator Hunt, for that opening. Questions for Senator Hunt? All right. You'll stick around to close?

HUNT: Thank you. Yes.

BREWER: OK, first proponent to LB930. Welcome to the Government Committee.

DENISE POWELL: Thank you. Thank you for having me. Good afternoon, Chairman Brewer and members of the Government Committee. My name is Denise Powell, D-e-n-i-s-e P-o-w-e-l-l. I'm here today in my role as the co-founder of She's Electable Nebraska, a 501c4 dedicated to closing the gender gap in politics through education, professional development, civic and youth engagement. She's Electable Nebraska, additionally looks to identify and tear down barriers that for women and fems considering running for office. We enthusiastically support LB930 as it would help remove a big hurdle that may keep qualified women from running for office in the first place. While this bill wouldn't only benefit women, the rate of moms who have had to leave the workforce to care for children during the pandemic illustrates the disproportionate impact navigating child care has on women. She's Electable Nebraska sees LB930 as that important missing piece that would help many working parents who want to serve their communities and their state as an elected official. According to the founder of Swish Boom, a Nebraska-based tech company that connects caregivers with babysitters, the going hourly rate for sitters in our state is \$14 an hour. Fourteen dollars per hour shouldn't be the reason that a state senator can't attend a town hall or stay late to listen to public testimony. It shouldn't be the reason a city councilwoman can't attend a neighborhood association meeting. Fourteen dollars per hour shouldn't be the thing that keeps a school board member from attending a PTA meeting for a school in his district. But it often does, and it's keeping folks from even running for office in the first place. Just like other industries in our state, Nebraska needs to look for

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innovative ways to build the workforce of public servants. We don't want to send a message to up-and-coming young professionals that there's no room for the transplant to Nebraska who doesn't have family to lean on for child care. No seat for low-and-middle-income parents who don't have any wiggle room in their family budget to swing for a babysitter and no place for the single parent who wants to serve but doesn't have that caregiving support. If I'm doing the math correctly, there are only nine members of this legislative body who have children under the age of 18. Three of those are women, six are men. That tells me that there are several members of this body who may not have a good sense for how expensive and hard it can be to find childcare these days. I urge you to listen to the voices who are living this challenge every day. I have enormous respect for the sacrifices that elected officials must make to do the work that they do. By advancing LB930 this body has the opportunity to make it just a little bit easier for parents and guardians who care as much about this work as you do. Thank you for listening, and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

BREWER: All right, thank you for your testimony. Let's see if we have any questions for you. All right. You're going to get off easy.

DENISE POWELL: Woo, thank you.

BREWER: OK. Next proponent. Welcome to the Government Committee.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: Thank you for having us. Chairperson Brewer and members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee, I'm Meg Mikolajczyk, M-e-g M-i-k-o-l-a-j-c-z-y-k. This is Mick Bowen, and I'm the executive director of the Nebraska Civic Engagement Table. The Nebraska Table is committed to building a more civically engaged Nebraska, predicated on the idea that a healthy political environment is one where any qualified person can run and actually hold office. I promise this wasn't a stunt. We have no child care because of COVID, and but I thought, you know, we're going to make it work, and this is a great illustration. I endorse everything the testifier prior to me said. And in addition, as someone who works sort of adjacent to policy holders on a regular basis, you can see that child care for a lot of us can be a huge barrier. And I really appreciate all of you for being so welcoming. He was about to mute me in the back he feels very strongly about this issue too. Democracy does work best when our policymakers can reflect a diversity of experience, geography, economic status and identities, including the identity of parent. People with small children face many additional barriers to running for office or holding those, holding offices as well. And of course, this disproportionately impacts women even though a majority of folks do want to see more women in office. I'm clearly speaking from

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personal experience today and childcare during these times when Legislature is in session when you're trying to be learning and researching and meeting with your constituents, I'm sure, make child care. And we need to be able to pay for child care essential if those folks are going to hold office, excuse you. Oh my gosh. So anyway, all of that is to say, this bill removes an unnecessary barrier for a key element of civic participation for those seeking to represent their communities. The Table's mission focuses on fostering a healthier democracy in the state and recognizes that maximizing the number of qualified people who may hold office is a cornerstone to achieving that goal. So for these reasons, the Nebraska Table and Mick urges the committee to advance LB930 to General File.

BREWER: Thank you, and we could have moved from LB930, the first bill today, had I known you were going to have to endure this, so I apologize.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: He was pretty good till LB930-- actually picked him up.

BREWER: He's doing great. He's doing great. I commend you. OK. Questions? Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. It's nice to see you again. I think actually last time that you testified at one of my bills, you were still incubating.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: Yeah, I think that's accurate.

BLOOD: Thanks for that smile. So I'm listening to Senator Hunt and I'm-- I'm listening to you and Denise, and I actually want to get something on the record because something's hurting my heart hearing these testimonies. I keep hearing the word barriers. But in other countries, they're just babies and family members that we have to take care of. In your personal opinion, and I know I'm putting you on the spot, it just-- it just-- you can hear me getting like it just seems wrong that we have to come in front of people and say, I have this very-- you have a child, you are a Nebraskan, another Nebraskan, like laws like this should just not be so hard. Why-- why do you think in the world that we live in here in Nebraska right now that we have to describe in this pro-life state why we need help like this?

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: I hope it's just positive intent that when the bill was originally drafted, we didn't think about this, but now we have a really great opportunity and maybe Mick illustrated for everybody how important this is and how easy of a fix it would be. I think Senator

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Hunt's-- I've seen Senator Machaela Cavanaugh's baby here. I've seen Senator Vargas recently with Luca. It's-- it's a reality. And I think too, we have a lot of young people who run for office in the state, which is such a gift that I don't think other states have. And so making it more and more accessible to folks, I think is really important and a really great opportunity to have it. I hope it's just lack of intent. When people who have this experience aren't making the policy, it's less likely that they're thinking about it, you know, so we want to make sure more people like Senator Hunt and Machaela Cavanaugh and all those folks who are going through this process now can bring that experience to their policymaking.

BLOOD: I guess, stop calling our babies barriers.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: And I think also just being open to Mick being here and not kicking me out makes me feel good too, because it is pretty intimidating as a parent who is stuck trying to do their job without childcare during the pandemic, in particular, to know what to do, so I really appreciate it.

BLOOD: You're living in the wrong country for that, unfortunately, right?

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: I-- no comment.

BLOOD: You don't have to, I just said it. Thank you.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: Thank you.

BREWER: All right. Additional questions? Boy, you are getting upstaged something fierce--

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: I know I like seeing lots of smiles and like, I hope it's because he's cute and not because-- if you did take pictures, would you share them?

BREWER: He's got the patience of an angel. Thank you.

MEG MIKOLAJCZYK: Thank you so much.

BREWER: All right. Thank you for your testimony. OK. Additional proponents. Welcome to the Government Committee.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Hi, good afternoon. Just FYI, also submitted this online, so I apologize for the duplication, but woke up this morning and I really felt like I needed to be here in person. So my name is Lisa Schoenberger, L-i-s-a S-c-h-o-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r, and I am a current

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elected official in the Omaha area. I'm also a current candidate, but I am not here in that capacity. I'm here on a far cooler capacity, which is that of a mom of two young daughters. They are five and three and really the impetus behind my desire to serve in public office. I'm here today in support of Senator Megan Hunt's LB930, which would allow candidates and elected officials to use campaign funds for expenses related to child care. I'm here today to talk a little bit more about representation, and I love that I get to do this with this committee in particular. This committee is home to the body's only Native-American member, the body's only Asian-American, Pacific Islander member and the body's only out LGBTQ member. So I think that you have a unique appreciation for what representation really means. It's incredibly significant to Nebraskans, whether or not you even recognize it, Senator Brewer. And that representation is really the best shot that we have for creating policy that represents all Nebraskans. And so I want to make sure that when we make policy, when we enact different laws, especially when it comes to campaigns, that we're keeping that representation first in mind. And Senator Hunt mentioned something that-- that I actually found in doing a lot of my research the-- the age of people currently serving in public office. So I did some research. I went through every single person who represents me in elected office, from President Biden to Governor Ricketts and the constitutional officers to my MUD board, every member of my local school board, all of those people and calculated the average age of those individuals. And I'm sure you have a guess that just popped into your head. The average age of all of those people is 60. And I'm going to be very honest with you. I plan to peak right around age 60, so there's absolutely nothing wrong with being 60. But it certainly-- there is a recency bias there that I could probably no better relate to individuals who are 16 today than individuals who are 60 can relate to the stage of life that I am currently living. So I think that representation really matters. I'm actually the only person that represents me like me myself, that's under the age of 40 here in Nebraska. So I think it's really, really important that we clear whatever space needs to be cleared in order for young people to serve in office and advocate for policies that young families need and really be able to lay that foundation for the children that we're raising here in Nebraska. I'm sure that you would all agree that when an individual serves in public office, their entire family serves, their entire family makes that sacrifice so that they can come here and do the things that they do or serve on their local boards and commissions, which are often, by the way, unpaid. So this-- this bill to be able to facilitate, being able to-- to execute that office in that way really honors that-- that commitment that the whole entire

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family makes to that public service. So I urge you to advance LB930 and happy to answer any questions that you have.

BREWER: Thank you for your testimony. And Lisa, I do have your letter here, so.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Yeah.

BREWER: You're double-covered.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Yes, good.

BREWER: Senator Blood.

BLOOD: Thank you, Chairman Brewer. How are you today, Lisa?

LISA SCHOENBERGER: I'm doing very well. Thank you, Senator.

BLOOD: I haven't seen you for a while, you're always so cheery. So you talked a little bit about having too littles.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Mm-Hmm. Yeah.

BLOOD: Can you give kind of an example about how a bill like this might benefit you?

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Yeah, absolutely. So my husband is a teacher and a phenomenal father, by the way, and typically is able to-- to cover things when I need to be executing the rules in my office. And we're usually able to do this because meetings are relatively predictable. We recently went through a strategic planning process in the office that I serve in and so we had several additional meetings in addition to our regular council meetings. And it happened to be that one of those was scheduled for a night when my husband had parent-teacher conferences. And so we were-- we were really in a bind. And I do want to point out that I am one of 12 on-- in the position that I serve in, and I am the only one with children under the age of five and we focus very heavily on early childhood education. So I mean, it was pretty important that I be there to participate in this process. So these are the kinds of situations all unfortunately, all six of my children's grandparents live far away now, especially like during the winter months. So we were really kind of in a scramble. And those are the kinds of things where I feel like participating in some of these auxiliary types of things that are related to public office that are less predictable or come up last minute. Or those kinds of things is-- is really important.

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BLOOD: How-- how hard is it to find a babysitter nowadays?

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Well, I would say in the age of COVID, it's probably harder than-- than you would anticipate. And-- and it's, you know, like I said, it's pretty expensive too, you know, really to get somebody good and reliable that you trust with your children. It's not a small investment. And you know, when you're serving as a volunteer in a volunteer capacity, you know that-- that is, you know, an additional expense.

BLOOD: What is-- I mean, I know, she said, like with the average going rate, but in your experience-- I have to tell you, I had a flashback to-- I had to babysit for a family for 12 hours, OK? They snuck in a second family and only paid me a dollar an hour for their family. I always remember that. And so when I heard \$13 an hour, it's like, good grief. But if-- you know, I'm 60 so, in decades it's gone up a lot..

LISA SCHOENBERGER: I'd say that's a pretty-- a pretty reasonable. The better you pay, the easier it is to get a sitter, I'll tell you that for sure. And especially, like I said, someone reliable and--

BLOOD: Knows CPR.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: --you know that will show up and you know.

BLOOD: Yeah.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Yeah.

BLOOD: All right. Thanks. Sorry, I don't mean to be [INAUDIBLE]

LISA SCHOENBERGER: No, that's great. I appreciate it.

BLOOD: Yeah.

BREWER: But just so you know that I'm still in touch, I have a 1-year-old grandchild that I had to babysit the other day [LAUGHTER] and I had strict orders from his mother to have him in bed by 7:00.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: And did you do it?

BREWER: At 11 o'clock we were playing with GI Joes and-- [LAUGHTER]

LISA SCHOENBERGER: I know that when my parents do babysit, they always-- they always say, this is why you do this when you're young, because you just don't have the energy for it when you-- when you get older, so I feel it.

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BREWER: I didn't have the energy for it then. But I know when have them come home and I'm asleep and the kids playing, so, yeah.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: I'm sure you're a really fun grandpa.

BREWER: Yeah, right. OK, questions? All right. Thank you for your testimony.

LISA SCHOENBERGER: Thank you.

LOWE: Why didn't you give him the Tomahawk?

BREWER: No, no, I'm a reasonably good grandfather. Welcome to the Government Committee.

CLAIRE WIEBE: Thank you. I lost my glasses. Good afternoon, Chairperson Brewer and members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee. My name is Claire Wiebe, C-l-a-i-r-e W-i-e-b-e, and I am here representing Planned Parenthood advocates of Nebraska and to state our strong support of LB930. As the advocacy and political arm of Planned Parenthood North Central States in Nebraska, our 501c4 organization mobilizes supporters of all party to protect, promote and expand access to sexual and reproductive health care and fact-based, medically accurate sexuality education. We do our work in the community under the dome and at the ballot box. As Planned Parenthood advocates of Nebraska, we believe that our democracy only works when all of us are represented, and that includes parents. Parents are always juggling many responsibilities and people who run or hold elected office are no different. Child care is regularly listed as a top expense in many, many households, and as the pandemic has shown, it can sometimes be inconsistent or difficult to find. Add to that the often irregular and long hours of being an elected official, and it is no surprise that many parents struggle to manage it all. In addition, child care spending is a matter of gender equity. Decades of research and job losses due to the recent pandemic show that women are inequitably shouldering the burden of child care both financially and with our time. Combined with that, the irregular hours that you all work, you all work hard. You're in meetings, voting, debating, connecting with constituents, and many women and parents feel like they're unable to both participate as elected officials and meet the needs of their families. And this can have a ripple effect. That means a less representative political body in the state, which means lawmaking that just doesn't work for everybody. In a time where our rights and our democratic norms are under attack, it's essential to ensure fair representation at all levels of government. LB930 will help more parents execute the duties of their office successfully,

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increase representation of parents at all levels of government and increase gender equity in our state. So we'd like to thank Senator Hunt for bringing this bill, and we urge you all to pass it on to General File.

BREWER: All right, thank you for your testimony. Let's see if we have any questions. All right, thank you.

CLAIRE WIEBE: Thank you.

BREWER: OK. Any additional proponents? Welcome to the Government Committee.

JULIE WERTHEIMER: Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Julie Wertheimer. That's J-u-l-i-e W-e-r-t-h-e-i-m-e-r. I am here representing the ACLU of Nebraska here in support of LB930. The ACLU and I first want to thank Senator Hunt for bringing this bill. Despite the tremendous progress made in the struggle for gender equality, women still face violence, discrimination and institutional barriers-- and institutions that perpetuate discrimination against women. So, I'm sorry-- institutional barriers to equal participation in society. Through litigation, advocacy and public education, the ACLU pushes for change and systemic reform in institutions that perpetuate discrimination against women. One measure of gender equality is women's political participation. The Institute for Women's Policy Research's status of women in the states gives Nebraska a D grade and a rank of 37 out of 50 on women's political participation, with overall low numbers of women and women of color in elected office. We can and must do better as a state. I want to say upfront that it's important to recognize that not all caregivers are women, but we need to acknowledge that the work of caring for children and family members is disproportionately assumed by women. Given the expense of child care and the low salaries for state senators, this bill is critical to ensuring that Nebraskans of all genders and with all kinds of families can pursue public office if they so choose. LB930 removes one of the barriers women face in choosing to run for political office by allowing child care expenses and child travel expenses to be allowable expenses under the Political Accountability and Disclosure Act. Without this bill, we are missing out on qualified candidates who can't afford child care on a Nebraska legislator's salary. Without this financial burden, more women and single parents and guardians will be given the opportunity to run for office and represent constituents who share their same values. Representation matters and passing LB930 will bring greater diversity among Nebraska's elected officials. The ACLU of Nebraska offers our full support of this bill,

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and I would urge its advancement, and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

BREWER: All right, thank you. Questions for Julie? All right. Thank you for your testimony.

JULIE WERTHEIMER: Thank you.

BREWER: OK? Any more proponents? Go ahead. He can be a gentleman. Welcome.

CINDY MAXWELL-OSTDIEK: Thank you.

BREWER: Whenever you're ready.

CINDY MAXWELL-OSTDIEK: Thanks, I'm Cindy Maxwell-Ostdiek. That's C-i-n-d-y M-a-x-w-e-l-l-O-s-t-d-i-e-k. And I thank you, Chairperson Brewer and the members of the Government, Military, and Veterans Affairs Committee. I'm here today as a proponent for LB930, and I thank Senator Hunt for introducing this important legislation. I am testifying as a co-founder of the Legislative Study Group and as a mom, a voter and a candidate for Nebraska Legislature for District 4 in west Omaha. I have a vested interest in this bill as a Nebraskan and a voter, but not as a candidate. My children are in middle and high school and our family no longer needs child care services. I will let you know just a few years ago when I still did need babysitting, I paid more than \$15 an hour in our neighborhood. It's hard to come by. As a mom, I'm concerned about the future of our state and the loss of so many talented young people leaving Nebraska. My background in HR recruiting and sales leads me to recognize that Nebraska needs to retract-- attract and retain people to grow our businesses. We need growing families. I think addressing Nebraska's brain drain will require more diversity among our elected officials. And I know Lisa had mentioned that this particular committee does have a lot of diversity, but as a whole and throughout the state, we do need more young people, people of different religions, disability, income, race, ethnicity, gender, sex and LGBTQ status. We need to elect more everyday Nebraskans, including parents of younger children, because income and status as a parent shouldn't be a barrier to public service. I personally talked with some young parents about running for office. I'm a recruiter and I have a civic-minded heart, and I would love to have more diversity with people who represent me. But those people have said they cannot just imagine swinging it with everything involved in the expenses. This one change could help our next legislator. Our policies must all be-- also be brought up-to-date with current times. I was surprised to read some of the language when I was

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reading through the statute and the requirement that officials must attend the event together with their spouse to be covered for an expense. It just really blew me away. It's very obviously written some time ago with male fathers in mind. Someone whose wife would be attending the function with them and they would need a babysitter. Of course, other situations could arise for people who are single parents or when a spouse has their own scheduling conflicts, such as a job or going to school. That seems like it would be more of a technical update, and I would hope that all of these other instances would bring you to believe that the technical update applies to the whole bill. Please move forward on this, and I apologize. I feel like I was running out of time, but please move forward on this and advance it out of committee. Thank you.

BREWER: Well, you're plum good on time. Don't worry. OK, questions? Any questions? All right. Thanks for coming and testifying. All right. Additional proponents. Oh yes. I didn't mean to cut you off there, but she was already farther up and thought it the right thing to do.

WESTIN MILLER: Senator Brewer, members the committee, my name is Westin Miller, W-e-s-t-i-n M-i-l-l-e-r. I'm the director of public policy with Civic Nebraska here in support of LB930. I think it's a great way to make holding office just a little bit easier. As I'm sure you all know by now, Civic Nebraska is all about encouraging public trust in elections, encouraging civic engagement. We seek to remove unnecessary bureaucratic barriers to participation whenever we can. We think that includes public service as much as it includes voting. So I think the case for this bill is really straightforward. It's been very well-covered. I just wanted to specifically mention that if the idea of Nebraska being a citizen Legislature is at all interesting or valuable to you, I think it's very important that holding office is actually a financial possibility for all citizens. I think that bill gets us a little bit closer. So thanks to Senator Hunt for this great bill. Thanks to you all for your time. I would answer any questions.

BREWER: All right, thank you, Westin. Questions? All right. Thanks for your testimony.

WESTIN MILLER: Thank you.

BREWER: Are we still on proponents? Is there any opponents? We got someone in the neutral. It's like I'm psychic. Come on up. All right, Frank, welcome back again.

FRANK DALEY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Frank Daley, D-a-l-e-y. I serve as the executive director of the Nebraska

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Accountability Disclosure Commission, and I'm feeling like the ultimate bad guy for not testifying in favor of this bill. But actually, the commission is taking a neutral stand on this because really this is a public policy issue, and the commission typically does not take positions on public policy issues. What I did want to do is provide you with a context for this bill. The original version of the Accountability and Disclosure Act, which was passed in 1976, essentially said campaign funds could be used for campaign purposes only, not personal purposes, not office-holding related-expenses. And as time went on, there have been different times when the Legislature has seen a need to create a specific exception to that general concept. So currently, the Act provides that you can use campaign funds for meals, travel and lodging of the office holder when engaged in the duties of his or her public office. That was a specific statutory exception to the general rule that the Legislature made, and it made others. So I guess my point here is that in order to address the issue that Senator Hunt has raised with her bill, it takes a statutory exception of the statutory enactment. We can't interpret our way around what's trying to be accomplished here. So with that in mind, I just want to say that, you know, obviously the notion of a family has changed a lot since 1976, and I'm really grateful that Senator Hunt has raised this in the context of a legislative bill so that you can look at it and make some decisions and perhaps change the law in the matter.

BREWER: All right. Thank you, Frank. Questions for Frank? Well, thanks for hanging around all-- oh, I'm sorry.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

BREWER: [INAUDIBLE] up higher.

McCOLLISTER: In the opening the senator made the comment that your-- it's possible to buy drinks at Billy's for your colleagues. I don't think that's correct, is it, Mr. Daley?

FRANK DALEY: I don't think it is unless there's a campaign issue there.

McCOLLISTER: I didn't think that was one of the exceptions.

FRANK DALEY: Exactly. Exactly.

McCOLLISTER: OK, thank you very much.

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FRANK DALEY: But if you make it a campaign event then the answer is yes.

McCOLLISTER: Yeah. With-- with alcohol?

FRANK DALEY: Yes.

McCOLLISTER: Is that right? [LAUGHTER]

FRANK DALEY: I have heard rumors that at campaign events there's occasionally alcohol, so.

McCOLLISTER: Really?

FRANK DALEY: Really.

McCOLLISTER: No, not me. Thank you.

_____ : Eight years of missed opportunity.

BREWER: All right. Any other questions for Frank? All right. Thanks again.

FRANK DALEY: Thank you.

BREWER: OK. Anyone else in the neutral? If not, we will welcome Senator Hunt back up for a close.

HUNT: Thank you to all the testifiers, and thank you to Mr. Daley for working with my office on this question since I got elected and for coming here and being a resource to all of us to hopefully come to a resolution for this problem. My child has certainly never been a barrier. I don't-- I don't see my kiddo as a barrier. And with me, you know, when I cannot find a way, I make a way. And that's why I introduced this bill. There were many good points brought up by folks that came before me here. You know, my ask is really not that deep. In a couple of months, I have to go to a conference in Denver where I serve on a committee because of my role as an elected official and I would like to buy a plane ticket for my child as well instead of having to find child care for them for five days. That would just be easier for me. Works for them. Be a nice family outing. It's a great opportunity for them to get some education as well. Senator Hansen has been with me and my child at different conferences where we were able to do things together, and it's great to expose kids to lawmaking and to government, and I think it's overall a good thing. I don't think that people want to discriminate. I don't think that, you know, that was the intention of the law when it was first passed to make this

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hard for mothers or anything like that. I just think that that's unfortunately been the outcome. So it would be a lot easier for me if I could bring my kid with me to conferences and pay for a babysitter once in a while so I can do my job. And so I'd appreciate you to advance the bill. Thank you.

BREWER: You did see this monstrous A bill with it, didn't you? Three hundred whole dollars.

HUNT: Yeah.

BREWER: So pretty reasonable considering most of the A bills we get around here.

HUNT: Thank you.

BREWER: Oh, I got to read the letters in. Hang on. And offline, let's talk about some possible path ahead as far as how we might look at getting this to a place where we can get it moving.

HUNT: Sounds good.

BREWER: All right. We have seven letters and they're proponents. We have zero in opposition and zero in the neutral. And with that, we will close hearings on LB930 and we will close our hearings for the afternoon for Government.