

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office
Business and Labor Committee March 19, 2024
Rough Draft

RIEPE: Welcome. This is the Business and Labor Committee. Today is Tuesday, March 19. I am Merv Riepe, Chairman of the Business and Labor Committee. My district is 12-- the 12th District in Omaha and Ralston of-- I would have the self-introduction of the committee members, but we have none present at the time. I do have with me on my right here, I have Benson Wallace, who is on loan. The legal counsel for the Business and Labor Committee is out ill today. And Logan Walsh here is on my left, who is the committee clerk. And today's page, the young la-- lady back here is Molly, who's a student at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. We appreciate her being here. We're asking anyone that's here or not here to please, please silence their beepers. Today and before each hearing, all bills that are heard will be posted outside the hearing room and heard in the order as posted. On each of the tables near the door, you will find green testifier sheets. If you intend to testify today-- that won't be necessary, I believe. Please fill out-- legibly print all information and hand it to the page when you come to testify. This will help us keep an accurate record of the hearing. If you are not testifying at the microphone but want to go on record as having a position on a bill being heard, there are white sign-in sheets at each entrance-- or, at the entrance where you may leave your name and other pertinent information. Also, I would like to note: if you are not testifying but you have a position letter to submit, the Legislature's policy is that all letters for the record must be received by the committee by 8 a.m. on the day of the hearing. The senator introducing the proposed legislation will first present and will be given the time needed, with no lights. For purposes of the record-- recorded record, we ask each presenter to state one's name, spell it, and state who you represent. Senators who serve on the committee are encouraged to ask questions for clarification. That said, the presenter and those testifying are not allowed to ask questions of the senators serving on the committee. Senators may have computers, laptops at their disposal regarding the hearing, so please understand they are paying attention, they just sometimes have to be tuned in on other hearings that are going on as well. In the Business and Labor Committee, we will use the light system to promote maximum engagement. That will not apply to our confirmation hearing today. In normal procedure, each testifier will have five minutes to testify. When you begin, the light will be green. When the light turns yellow, that means you will have one minute remaining. It's kind of like traffic lights. When the light turns red, please end your testimony and we will ask you to wrap up your final thoughts. You will not be subject to the light system today. The five-minute rule may change

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based on the number of people wanting to speak. We have a strict no prop policy. Should you have handouts you wish to share, please share ten copies and ask the page to make more-- ask the page to make ten copies. Please be aware that any handouts submitted by testifiers will be included as part of the record as exhibits. The pages will then distribute any and all handouts to committee senators. Following all proponent, opponent, and neutral testimony, the bill presenter is offered the opportunity to close with final remarks. As a committee, we will work diligently to provide a fair and full hearing. We will make every effort to accommodate special needs. Short of an emergency, this committee will not take action on the bi-- day of the bill or the hearing. At this hearing, we ask you to be respectful of the process and one another. With that, we begin today's hearing with Stephen-- is it Baley?

STEVEN BLEY: Bley.

RIEPE: How is it?

STEVEN BLEY: Bley.

RIEPE: Bley? OK. I would introduce to-- I have Senator Ibach, who's the Vice Chairman of the committee. And thank you for being here. And we would invite you and encourage you to go ahead and share your story and why you're interested in the role.

STEVEN BLEY: Good afternoon. My name is Steven Bley, S-t-e-v-e-n B-l-e-y. I am seeking appointment to the State Boiler Safety Code Advisory Board. This would be my fourth appointment to the board representing the owners of boilers in the state of Nebraska. I'm a registered professional engineer in the state of Nebraska and have been employed by the Omaha Public Power District for 21 years in charge of boilers, so. Very well familiar with the, the codes and safety rules. And hope to be of service to the people of the state by serving on the board.

RIEPE: Very good. You said this had been your third term?

STEVEN BLEY: I've done three. This would be the fourth.

RIEPE: This one would be the fourth?

STEVEN BLEY: Yes.

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RIEPE: I'll open it up for questions from the committee members.
Senator Ibach.

IBACH: Well, thank you. This might be the easiest one you've ever been through because it's mid-session. What do you think are some of the biggest challenges right now in the-- in your industry?

STEVEN BLEY: I would say the biggest challenge is-- you know, boilers are kind of an old technology and it's not very flashy and exciting. So attracting new people, you know, to the, to the profession is, is a challenge. So there's a lot of aging workforce that know the rules and regulations and safety aspects of boilers, but it's rare to get someone, you know, interested. So the, the recruitment and, and training up the next generation is probably the, the biggest challenge.

IBACH: Where would you find those recruits if you were looking for workforce?

STEVEN BLEY: You know, it's-- it takes-- it's a lot of varied skills in the boiler world. So there's engineers, obviously, there's architects, there's steamfitters, welders. All those people play a part. And so it's just, in general, in-- industry in general, attracting people that want to do that kind of work.

IBACH: Very good. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

RIEPE: Tell me this: what's your staff shortage at this time? I assume you have one.

STEVEN BLEY: What's that?

RIEPE: Staff shortage? How many, how many open positions--

STEVEN BLEY: I wouldn't say we have any shortages at the moment, but-- you know, when you have an open position where you used to have 20 candidates, you might have 3. So it-- we're still finding people, but it's, it's not like it used to be.

RIEPE: Are you challenged to make it snazzy for the, the young millennials to--

STEVEN BLEY: It is cha-- that-- yep. Boilers are not a flashy, flashy career to have.

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RIEPE: They don't talk back.

STEVEN BLEY: Hmm?

RIEPE: They don't talk either.

STEVEN BLEY: They don't talk. If they do, it's a bad day.

RIEPE: Yeah. Yeah [INAUDIBLE] whistle.

STEVEN BLEY: Yep.

RIEPE: Question two is, how many inspections does-- do you have to conduct in a year's time? And I assume they're across the state.

STEVEN BLEY: So I-- on the board, I don't do inspections. I'm just overseeing-- or, advising the state inspectors. Different boilers have different rules depending upon their design and safety features. Many of them are an annual inspection. Some of them can go as far as three years. So-- and there's-- I don't remember how many are in the state, but it's several thousand.

RIEPE: OK. You obviously find something gratifying about it to come back for a fourth round.

STEVEN BLEY: Yeah, it's, it's just-- it's fun to ser-- it's good to serve. I feel-- I, I've got an area of expertise, so if I can put it to use to help the public, I am happy to do so.

RIEPE: Very good. OK. You seem well-qualified. You have a beautiful wife and daughter, so that works in your [INAUDIBLE] advantage as well. All right. Are there other questions from the committee? Seems like none. Thank you very much. We appreciate you being here. And we will be back in contact with you as soon as some action is taken.

STEVEN BLEY: OK. Thank you.

RIEPE: And we do have to-- ultimately, I think we have to present this up on the Chamber floor, so that will be a little bit of time.

STEVEN BLEY: Yep. Understand.

RIEPE: OK. Thank you. Thank you for being here.

STEVEN BLEY: Thank you.

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IBACH: Thanks, Steven.

RIEPE: With that, I would like to go into Executive Session. Can you tell me [INAUDIBLE]-- oh. Do we have any proponents? Any opponents? We have one that waives. OK. OK. Hearing none. Thank you very much. OK.