

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

Agriculture Committee  
March 30, 2016

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[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Agriculture met at 12:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 30, 2016, in Room 1524 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on a gubernatorial appointment. Senators present: Jerry Johnson, Chairperson; Dave Bloomfield; Ernie Chambers; Tyson Larson; Merv Riepe; and Ken Schilz. Senators absent: Mark Kolterman, Vice Chairperson, and Burke Harr.

SENATOR JOHNSON: I told the Speaker that...the Clerk that we have an interim hearing and we need to move on as fast as we can. It does start again at 12:25, but I told them we might be late. We have a confirmation hearing today for the State Fair Board representative and Mr. Harry Hoch is here. I'll have the senators introduce themselves. You can take a seat here and prepare for your testimony. So start over here with Senator Chambers. Would you introduce yourself?

SENATOR CHAMBERS: Ernie Chambers.

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Dave Bloomfield, District 17 up in the northeast corner of the state.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Start down with Senator Larson.

SENATOR LARSON: Tyson Larson, District 40.

SENATOR SCHILZ: Ken Schilz, District 47, Ogallala.

SENATOR KOLTERMAN: Mark Kolterman, District 24, Seward, York, and Polk.

SENATOR JOHNSON: Jerry Johnson, District 23. Rick Leonard is the research analyst and Christina Estrada is our clerk. And we don't have a big crowd today. I don't think we need to go through all the procedures. But what we'll ask you to do is give your name and spell it and then give us a little bit of a summary of your activities and why you are the new appointee recommendation. So turn it over to Mr. Hoch.

HARRY HOCH: (Exhibit 1) Okay. My name is Harry Hoch, H-a-r-r-y H-o-c-h. I was asked by Governor Ricketts if I'd like to serve on the State Fair Board for the replacement of...because of the unfortunate death of Bill Marshall, who was actually a good friend, and served as our banker for a number of years in our business. I've been a resident of Grand Island since 1974 and worked in our family business, which was an Anheuser-Busch distributorship. In 1986 when my

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father passed away, I became president. My brother and I ran the business. We decided late in the year or last year to sell the business and sold it the middle part of December. In those last 40 years, I've been involved in numerous things in Grand Island in the community from Central Catholic to the Stuhr Museum, Grand Island Community Foundation. My wife and I chaired the United Way campaign one year. We've been involved in...I was involved in the start-up of College Park and a number of other areas like that. So we have a strong community involvement there. I just finished up on the Community Foundation. And I was excited and honored to be asked to serve on this board. I think my years of experience in business and marketing and naturally finance of a business will help me and help the board along the way. I always have to be looking for new ways to attract and increase attendance. And it supports...agriculture is our number one industry. And you're talking to a kid that was born in St. Louis that, you know, at that time thought milk came from cartons (laughter). Over the years, I've learned a lot contrary to that so I'd entertain any questions. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Hoch. Anybody have any questions? Senator Larson. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR LARSON: No questions. I just wanted to say thank you for everything you did for the city of Grand Island. I know you ran an excellent business. And as Chairman of the General Affairs Committee, obviously I've dealt with you on a number of issues, and you've always been good to work with and honest. And I look forward to supporting you on your appointment to the State Fair Board. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Senator Bloomfield. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Thank you. Mr. Hoch, I see that your appointment runs out in December of '17. What's a normal length of a full term? [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: I believe it's three years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: It's three years. It's tough to say at this point, but would you be inclined to seek reappointment? [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: Absolutely. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR BLOOMFIELD: Okay. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

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SENATOR JOHNSON: Other questions? I guess I might have a question. Do you have a question? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: Go ahead. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Just wondering, you've sold your business and there's been...you've had a connection with the State Fair location now that it was in your district when you had H&H Distributing. [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: And so you are out of it from the management standpoint or where... [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: I have no dealings with Eagle Distributing other than I do work with them as a consultant. But he wants me to do things like I'm on the National Beer Wholesalers Board still since I work with him, finish my term out which is two more years and to spend time with the Legislature. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. So... [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: But I have no day-to-day dealings with anything that they do from...in the normal course of business, I have no decision-making ability, nor do I want any. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: So from the standpoint of even having a potential conflict of interest, it would be somewhat removed. But you would be willing, if there was one, somebody perceived there was one, you would be able to...you would sign a conflict of interest statement. [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: Without a doubt. I wouldn't...yeah, I wouldn't enter into any vote or anything on something if I felt conflicted. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: I don't know anything about their pricing, promotions, marketing activities, anything that they would deal with, you know. I would encourage Mr. Nelson, who is the

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gentleman that bought our business, to pursue getting the Clydesdales back to the fair because I know that was always a nice draw. Everybody loved that when the horses were there. And try and get them on a rotation in and out of the fair on a regular basis, maybe every two to three years since they're in such demand everywhere. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Okay. Senator Schilz. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SCHILZ: No, you covered it. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR JOHNSON: Oh, covered it, okay. Any other questions? I see none. If you want to step back I'll first ask if there's any proponents. Seeing none, any opponents? Anyone in neutral position? Seeing none, thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

HARRY HOCH: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]