

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

[CONFIRMATION]

The Committee on Education met at 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 17, 2015, in Room 1525 of the State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska, for the purpose of conducting a public hearing on gubernatorial appointments. Senators present: Kate Sullivan, Chairperson; Rick Kolowski, Vice Chairperson; Roy Baker; Tanya Cook; Mike Groene; Adam Morfeld; Patty Pansing Brooks; and David Schnoor. Senators absent: None.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Good afternoon, everyone. I think we will begin. It's 1:30. This is the Education Committee. I am Kate Sullivan, representing District 41, and I am Chair of the committee. And I would like the committee members who are here to introduce themselves starting with the Vice Chair.

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Rick Kolowski, District 31, southwest Omaha.

SENATOR SCHNOOR: Dave Schnoor, District 15 which is Dodge County.

SENATOR COOK: I'm Tanya Cook. I'm the senator from District 13 in Omaha and Douglas County.

SENATOR BAKER: Roy Baker, senator from District 30.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you, Senators, and to my left is LaMont Rainey, the committee clerk (sic) for the committee, and also Mandy Mizerski, my far right, is the...no, the legal counsel. I'm sorry, LaMont.

LaMONT RAINEY: It's all right.

SENATOR SULLIVAN: I demoted you. Oh, excuse me. (Laughter) That was unintentional...and Mandy Mizerski who is not the legal counsel but the committee clerk. All right, we have three tasks before us today to hear two reappointments and also a new appointment to the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications Commission. So we will start with the first reappointment of Dennis Baack.

DENNIS BAACK: Do I need to fill out a green sheet for this or not? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: No, you do not. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

DENNIS BAACK: Oh, okay. I didn't know. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Thank you. I assume that you have a resume and stuff of mine there.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: We do, but could you give us a little overview of your experience thus far on the commission and why you'd like to continue? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: (Exhibit 1) I can, I can. I'm originally from out...way out west. I'm from Dix, Nebraska. That's where I grew up. And then I have a quite varied educational background. The first five or six years I was in school, I was in a one-room schoolhouse with 15 students and 4 of those students were from my family so that was a very small school. The 6th grade I started in at Dix in school and then I went through there and graduated from high school there; went from there to Colorado State University in Fort Collins, got a degree in history; went from there to Loyola, Chicago, downtown; and worked on my master's degree in urban planning; joined the Peace Corps after that, served in the Peace Corps in Brazil, worked for the Brazilian extension service down there. And when I came back, I bought a farm back out by Dix, farmed for about 20 years, was a school board member out in Dix for eight years, was in the Nebraska LEAD Program which is the Leadership Education Action Development Program from the university. I was in that from '82 until '84 and before I graduated from the LEAD Program, my name was in as...on the primary ballot for the Legislature, left...I graduated in March. In May, I won the primary and then in November I was elected to the Legislature, served in the Legislature for nine years. All six years I was on the Education Committee, the first six years, chaired the Government Committee for three years and then the last three years I was Speaker of the Legislature. And from then I resigned as Speaker and became executive director of the Community College Association and I've been with them ever since. That's kind of my background. I've been on the commission for one term, have enjoyed that tremendously, quite frankly. It was kind of a nice thing to do. I was one of the cosponsors of the legislation that created the statewide network for public radio and got the first funding and stuff established for public radio for all of the state to have public radio. It never made sense to me when I was in my tractor out there driving around and I was always listening to Colorado or Wyoming public radio. And I thought Nebraska ought to have public radio serving the whole state and not just Lincoln and Omaha at that time. I think that the commission has some challenges ahead of them. Funding is always a challenge for public radio. Their federal funding and stuff has always been slowly decreasing. We do...they do a lot of fund-raiser things trying to get people to give and...to the commission. I think the other challenge we have is keeping up with technology. The technology changes very, very fast in their world and in order to do that, it takes a lot of dollars

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

to do that. And I think that...they have some very good things for the people that I work for, the community colleges. They do some things with their virtual library and stuff that have very good materials available for both students and faculty to use in their learning opportunities. They do so many things that are dealing with Nebraska history and I know a lot of those kind of things then make it into the classrooms and stuff across the community colleges at some point in time. So there's a lot of things going on with them. They're always looking for new ways to help us in education. They do a thing every year called...it's kind of a roundtable with education leaders and all but I think, Senator Sullivan, you've been on that show and they do that each year trying to look at the educational issues across the state. They've been very involved in a project trying to make sure that they can...the African-American men, their graduation rates were not as good as they were in the rest of Omaha and they've done some things in helping in that field. So they do some very good things there at NET. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: With respect to...you mentioned one of the challenges being technology. I assume you meant in terms of just keeping up with refurbishing what is...what you have and then also new features? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Absolutely. Yeah. You know, one of the things that I have found and when I got on there was that we have one of the best public television and radio systems in the country, we really do have, and they do...and we do have some of the best technology. The technology we use for doing our sports broadcasts and stuff, that mobile bus that they have to do those, is top notch. It's one of the best in the entire country. It's as good as ESPN or CBS Sports or any of those. They've really done a good job with that and have really kept up with it. And...but it's expensive to do that. And it...you know, so we've got to keep working on funding. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: When you look at the support NET has given to...specifically to education and then you look at some of the challenges that we have in education, whether it's declining enrollments in rural areas but then also college and career readiness, are there some things that, perhaps, the commission could be doing more of or has maybe left on the table that could be venturing into? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Oh, I'm sure there's things that we could do more of. I mean, I think they have done some things in, though, the career education, working with the Department of Education and creating these career-track videos and stuff that students and stuff can watch and learn about careers, the different careers in the state. And I think that's very, very valuable to have because that's one of the things that we have, the challenges, is getting students interested in the career paths that we have in community colleges. And I think this will help to do that. And they cooperate very closely with Department of Education, making sure that the things that

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

they're doing in the careers match up with their career clusters with the department.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. Thank you. Any other questions for Mr. Baack? Senator Groene.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, Chairman. What's the mix of your funding and what is the overall budget? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: You know, I don't know the exact total overall budget. I don't know. But we have...we get a lot of federal...but there's a lot of federal funds that go into it. We get some state General Fund that goes into the...into it. And then a lot of it is the fund-raisers and stuff that you hear on public radio and on public TV raising those funds locally and stuff for those dollars.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: Just curious how...what the mix was. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Yeah. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: But you don't get involved in that on the commission?
[CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: No, and I've not ever served on the finance committee so I don't...so I haven't looked at that, that closely. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: All right. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Senator Kolowski. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you, Ma'am. Dennis, thank you for your excellent background and what you do for us in the state. Your own journey from Dix, Nebraska, and Colorado State, Loyola, Brazil, what traits served you best as you were going through significant geographical changes, to say the least, in your life that you think were anchors for you that made a difference in your life? [CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

DENNIS BAACK: Maybe I just didn't know what I was getting into. (Laughter) I don't know. No, you know, I mean, I...you know, that's hard to say, I guess. But I would guess that, you know, if...when...in looking back on it, probably the most influential teacher I had was the drama and speech teacher that I had in high school and stuff and got me very, very interested in that and I carried that through with every...you know, what I used to...when I went to college, people, they just hated speech class. That was one of my favorites. Most people just absolutely hated it and I didn't at all. I liked that sort of thing. So...and the Peace Corps, I think it was just...you know, the Peace Corps was very early on. You know, I...when I...I graduated from high school in '65. Peace Corps started in '63. And as I graduated from high school, I said one of the things I was definitely going to do at some point was be a part of the Peace Corps. And I got the opportunity to do that and it was a great experience. It's one thing to go to a country and visit. And it's another one to immerse yourself totally in that country and learn the language. And one of the things that was really interesting about that Peace Corps experience was that we were the first group from the Peace Corps that was sent to another country with no language training, zero, because they were experimenting with...and they do it all that way now. But they used to be you'd have about six weeks of language training in country and then you'd be sent over there. And they found that they weren't learning the language fast enough. And when they put us in a city of about 1.5 million and there were, like, 15 of us and we were spread all over the city and you just had to learn to figure it...you just had to figure it out. So you learned the language much, much faster because you didn't have any choice. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: What city were you in? [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: I was in Belo Horizonte actually... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: ...is where...the city where we did our first training. But now I'm...when I was in the Peace Corps, I was clear out in the...Mato Grosso do Sul it's called now, and it was clear out by Cuiaba and way, way out west in Brazil... [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Okay. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: ...actually was the area where they...I was actually there helping farmers and stuff raising soy beans and that sort of thing, clearing...most of that was not even cleared jungle yet when I was there, so. [CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Not...not...that was... (inaudible.) Thank you. Appreciate your background. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: Um-hum. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions? Thank you, Mr. Baack. [CONFIRMATION]

DENNIS BAACK: You bet. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: It doesn't appear that there's anyone wishing to speak regarding this reappointment just...but just to make sure...all right. Thank you very much. [CONFIRMATION]

_____ : I would recommend his reappointment. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: We will now move on to a new appointment of Marilyn Hadley. Welcome. Can I...do you mind if I call you Marilyn? I'm so used to calling you that. (Laugh) [CONFIRMATION]

MARILYN HADLEY: (Exhibit 1) Well, thank you for inviting me today. It's nice to have an opportunity to talk with you. I, too, came from a small town of Nebraska. I was born and raised in Red Cloud, my father was a small businessman. My mother was a teacher until she started a family and then she had to retire. I had three brothers...three younger siblings and my education career began after I finished the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and took a job in Racine, Wisconsin. And I came from a town of 1,500 and ended up teaching in a junior high that had 1,500 students. And so it was a...as you might imagine, it was quite a shock for me. I...the community was 100,000 located between Chicago and Milwaukee and at that time, in the late '60s, a lot of drug traffic. So I learned a great deal in a short period of time. Then I came back to Nebraska. I taught in...at...in Lincoln at Robin Mickle Junior High. And while there, I...several things happened: one, I had an opportunity to work with a lot of student teachers and students who were going into teaching and...from the university and from Wesleyan. And I really became interested in teacher education. And at the same...around the same time, I met my future husband who had...who was teaching at the University of South Dakota. And so it...I suppose it's a confluence of those two things changed my career plans and I decided to go into higher education and prepare future teachers and provide continuing education for existing teachers. And so I was very fortunate to be able to have a career in higher education and be able to teach in University of South Dakota, University of Colorado, Colorado Springs, a metropolitan area, and then be able to come back home to the University of Nebraska at Kearney. And it's been a rewarding experience. I've loved every bit of it. I really want...I love teaching but actually I spent

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

much of my time as an administrator as well as a professor. And so I've got to see both sides of issues in higher education. I retired eight years ago after nine years of being dean of the College of Education. And my interest in education, my experience that led me to become involved in opportunities to give back to my local community and to give back to the state of Nebraska. And so my efforts in volunteer work have been primarily education related these last...I've been active more...six of the last eight years. I love being down here in Lincoln and it's part of my continuing education. I'm a former civics teacher and a political science major. So I have long admired the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications System. I'm a consumer. I listen to the radio and the TV programs. I have...I did not, at the time I was teaching, use this in my classroom. The technology was not such that you did. But I see that it is...provides great opportunity and...for people who are out of K through 12 education who want to continue their education. The news is presented in a nonbiased way. The programs are informative. They're educational and interesting. And I know that there are a lot of people who really value that kind of programming in Nebraska. So I'm very pleased and honored that I have been...that I have this opportunity to come before you and to possibly serve in the...on the telecommunications commission.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Are there any particular areas within telecommunications in this system that you'd especially like to work on or think that you could leverage your skills to help improve?
[CONFIRMATION]

MARILYN HADLEY: Well, I have done research. I've not had an orientation and I have not visited the NET system. I've...but I've spoken with the commissioner. I would say at this point, I don't know for sure where my expertise would lie. But I would be certainly very interested in the programming. I'd be interested in the finances. My goal is to become as informed as I can so that I can maintain the level of quality and help to improve it. Sixty years is a milestone that they're celebrating this year. And we as Nebraskans have a...we should be very proud of this, the programming and the whole support that we have given to NET. And so while I can't give you specifics of where I think I would fit in, I do think my expertise in education and my background as an administrator, I think, would help me find some ways to contribute. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Thank you. Any other questions for Ms. Hadley? Senator Kolowski.
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: Thank you. Marilyn, thank you very much for your service and excellent work that you do. As a fan of public radio and television as well, Saturday I was at a session in Washington, D.C., on a conference and Ken Burns was our last speaker of the conference. As you can well imagine, with the next year being the 100th anniversary of the national parks, the beautiful program he built on the national parks was fantastic. And that kind

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

of...I have to contrast that compared to regular TV and how you can't even find something decent on a channel, any channel on some nights even with all your choices, compared to the quality that we get out of NTV and NPR and everything else that...it makes such a difference. And we can't lose that quality of support and life that brings to our sanity in Nebraska as we look at the range of things that are on other sources. So I hope you'll be...I know you'll be able to add a great deal to what we're doing there and just keep up the good work. It will be great. Now, my second question was something about spousal choice but I won't go into it right now. (Laughter) I just...
[CONFIRMATION]

MARILYN HADLEY: You know, it's lasted 40 years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Senator Morfeld. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR MORFELD: No, I was joking. (Laughter) [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Oh. Senator Groene. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, Chairman. If we appoint you, will you make sure on St. Patty's Day I get Riverdancing (sic) and The Irish Tenors every year... (Laughter)
[CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR KOLOWSKI: There you go, there you go. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: ...with my Irish heritage? I appreciate that. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions or comments for Ms. Hadley? Thank you.
[CONFIRMATION]

MARILYN HADLEY: Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Again, not necessarily seeing anyone interested in speaking in...to this appointment, just wanted to make sure. All right. We will now move on to the third and final...this is a reappointment of Darlene Starman. Welcome. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: (Exhibit 1) Welcome. Thank you, Senator Sullivan.
[CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: We're from the same neck of the woods. I'm originally from Petersburg, Nebraska, Boone County, Nebraska. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay, very good. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: And my sister is married to an Armatys from Cedar Rapids, Nebraska, so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: All right. (Laugh) Very well connected. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: Is there a first question, because I'm sorry, I walked in a few minutes late? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: That's fine. Really what we'd like to know, even though we have your resume in front of us, a little bit about you and why you'd like to continue your reappointment. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: I was first reappointed...appointed to fill a vacancy back in the summer of 2008 and have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the commission. I feel that I come prepared. I do attend the meetings. I know that's a problem with many of the commissions where people don't attend. And I read the packets ahead of time. So I've come to really appreciate what NET represents and what they do in terms of education and enrichment for the citizens of Nebraska. So I would like to serve one more term, one more four-year term, on the board. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: So...and tell me again how long a term is? [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: They're four years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Four years, okay, very... [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: And it's my understanding there's no term limits on this commission but we do have to reapply every four years. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Looking back on... [CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

DARLENE STARMAN: So I've been on since '08. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Okay. Looking back on your experience, are there any particular things that come to mind that you feel have been accomplishments for you and your service on the commission? [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: I just think the way technology has advanced just in the six or seven years that I've been on is phenomenal. And I think that's going to just continue to be one of our challenges, is staying on top of technology and also maintaining our infrastructure. We have had some infrastructure problems, in the Hastings area most recently, and staying on top of maintaining our vast infrastructure which, as you know, we are a big state, so. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Yes, I heard about it the other day. My husband watches me all the time on the television and he wasn't able to get the voice the other morning. (Laughter) And I think he even... [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: Is this being televised? [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And I think he actually even called someone. I'm not sure who. But they assured him they were working on it. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: Well, good. There's excellent...there's just great, excellent staff at NET. I can't say enough. And I was on the interview committee when we picked our new executive director just last year. So I appreciated that opportunity. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Very good. Any other questions? Senator Groene. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: Thank you, Chairman. Since you've been on the board, could you educate me a little bit? How many members are there? [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: There's 11, and six of us are lay members such as myself. And the rest are from the educational community. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: And is it by district, or... [CONFIRMATION]

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

Education Committee
March 17, 2015

DARLENE STARMAN: Yes, there's two laypeople from each congressional district, so I'm representing District 1, of course. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR GROENE: All right. I just noticed three rural folks, backgrounds. That was nice to see. Thank you. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: Any other questions, comments for her? Thank you for your service. [CONFIRMATION]

DARLENE STARMAN: Thank you. Thank you, Senators. [CONFIRMATION]

SENATOR SULLIVAN: And again, one final opportunity for anyone to speak to this reappointment. If that...if not, this closes the hearing. Thank you all. [CONFIRMATION]