

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**BRANDT:** OK. Welcome, everybody, to the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Tom Brandt from Plymouth. I represent the 32nd Legislative District, and I serve as chair of the committee. The committee will take up the bills in the order posted. The pub-- this public hearing is your opportunity to be part of the legislative process and to express your position on the proposed legislation before us. If you're planning to testify today, please fill out one of the green testifiers sheets that are on the table at the back of the room. Be sure to print clearly and fill it out completely. When it is your turn to come forward and to testify. Give the testifier sheet to the page or to the committee clerk. If you do not wish to testify but would like to indicate your position on a bill, there will also-- there are also yellow sign-in sheets back on the table for each bill. These sheets will be included as an exhibit in the official hearing record. When you come up to testify, please speak clearly into the microphone. Tell us your name, and spell your first and last name to ensure we get an accurate record. We will begin each bill hearing today with the introducer's opening statement, followed by proponents of the bill, then opponents, and finally by anyone speaking in the neutral capacity. We will finish with the closing statement by the introducer, if they wish to give one. We will be using-- we will either be using a five-minute light or a three-minute light, it depends on the number of testifiers. When you begin your testimony, the light on the table will be green. When the yellow light comes on, you have one minute remaining. And the red light indicates you need to wrap up your final thought and stop. Questions from the committee may follow. Also, committee members may come and go during the hearing. This has nothing to do with the importance of the bills being heard. It is just part of the process as senators may have bills to introduce in other committees. A few final items to facilitate today's hearing. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony, please bring up at least 12 copies and give them to the page. Please silence or turn off your cell phones. Verbal output-- bursts or applause are not permitted in the hearing room. Such behavior may be cause for you to be asked to leave the hearing. Finally, committee procedures for all committees state that written position comments on a bill to be included in the record must be submitted by 8 a.m. the day of the hearing. The only acceptable method of submission is via the Legislature's website at [nebraskalegislature.gov](http://nebraskalegislature.gov). Written position letters will be included in the official hearing record, but only those testifying in person before the committee will be included on the committee statement. I will now have the committee members with us today introduce themselves, starting on my left.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Chairman Brandt. Senator Jana Hughes, District 24: Seward, York, Polk, and a little bit of Butler County.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Barry DeKay, District 40, representing Holt, Knox, Cedar, Antelope, northern part of Pierce, northern part of Dixon Counties.

**MOSEY:** Mike Moser, I represent District 22. It's Platte County and parts of Stanton County.

**RAYBOULD:** Jane Raybould, Legislative District 28, which is the core of the city of Lincoln.

**JUAREZ:** Margo Juarez, District 5 in south Omaha.

**BRANDT:** Also assisting the committee today to my right is our legal counsel, Cyndi Lamm. And to my far left is our committee clerk, Sally Schultz. Our pages for the committee today are Emma Jones, a junior at the university, and Kathryn, a junior majoring in environmental studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. With that, we will begin today's hearing with LB121. Welcome.

**HARDIN:** Thank you, Chairman Brandt. And good afternoon, senators of the Natural Resources Committee. I'm Senator Brian Hardin. For the record, that is B-r-i-a-n H-a-r-d-i-n, and I represent the Banner, Kimball and Scotts Bluff Counties of the 48th Legislative District in western Nebraska. I'm here to introduce LB121, which is a simple and straightforward bill. LB121 will ban the land disposal of solar panels and wind turbine blades in our state. Wind turbine blades are primarily made from composite materials like fiberglass and epoxy resin. These materials are extremely durable and resistant to decomposition, meaning they take centuries to break down in landfills. The blades are massive, often exceeding 100 feet in length. Their size means they occupy significant space in landfills, which can accelerate the depletion of landfill capacity. While wind energy itself is considered clean, the disposal of blades creates a paradox. Dumping blades in landfills negates the environmental benefits of wind energy by contributing to long-term waste issues. The materials used to manufacture these blades, such as fiberglass, are also difficult to recycle. When blades are sent to landfills, these valuable materials are essentially wasted, instead of being repurposed. It's also a wasted use of land. Over time, landfills dedicated to wind turbine blades could require significant land resources which could otherwise be used for other purposes, such as agriculture or urban development. We must also consider the impacts this could have on our fresh water

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

supply. Nebraska sits on top of one of the largest freshwater aquifers in the world. The Ogallala Aquifer lies under eight different states from South Dakota to Texas and covers approximately 174,000 square miles. Having graveyards for green energy increases the chances that the largest freshwater source in North America could be contaminated. As rainwater seeps through the earth passed by the buried panels and turbines through shredded fiberglass and various exotic industrial adhesives, the chances of contaminating the number one fresh water source for eight different states becomes very vulnerable. I'm not here to debate with anyone the construction or the effectiveness of wind and solar energy. That's a discussion for another time. The fact of the matter is that last week, a new presidential administration began, and I believe that the federal subsidies making renewable energy profitable are going away. That is what the administration has communicated. Over the next several years, I believe we will see more green energy projects decommissioned than built. According to available data, Nebraska currently has around three dozen utility-scale wind farms. The decommissioned parts of these wind farms are going to have to go somewhere. I prefer they go somewhere else, to a state that allows them, and not be buried in our backyard. This concludes my opening statement, and I'm ready to answer any questions you might have.

**BRANDT:** All right. Let's see if we have any questions. Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Chairman Brandt. Thanks for bringing this bill, Senator Hardin. I'm happy to see it again. We saw it last year, or maybe two years ago. But do you, do you know of any solutions for these blades? I know there's been talks about like shredding them up, recycling, recyclingwise. I don't know if you've done any research preparing for this.

**HARDIN:** My understanding is that what's unfortunate is while there are attempts at being made to recycle, it's cost-prohibitive to recycle. We haven't come up with a, an elegant way of doing that in a cost-effective way so far. That would be the easiest thing, right? That's what we look at to say, hey, let's just recycle it. So far, we don't seem to have a really cogent way. Attempts are being made to do just that. And so in Wyoming, for example, they're talking about bills related to stuffing them down, abandoned mine openings and that sort of thing. Trying to figure out where to put it. But in the meantime, it sounds like it's an ongoing process to try and figure out how to shred them.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**HUGHES:** And if I may, do you, in your looking into this, how many landfills currently in Nebraska do accept them?

**HARDIN:** That I do not know. What we know is that there's going to be a great demand. You know, the challenge is the decommissioning.

**HUGHES:** No, right. In 25-- every 15 years those blades come down and yeah.

**HARDIN:** Yeah.

**HUGHES:** OK. Thank you.

**BRANDT:** Senator DeKay.

**DeKAY:** I wasn't going to ask a question, but since you called on me, I will.

**BRANDT:** You had your hand up before. Don't put your hand up.

**DeKAY:** You piqued my interests when you said Wyoming and abandoned mines. Are you talking like to strip mines for coal, the holes that are left in the ground, to fill them with that and cover it with topsoil?

**HARDIN:** Interestingly, I think before their legislature this season is this very issue. And so I think that's yet to be determined. But I think it's any and all. There actually is a very large, open-faced area near Casper where they're burying them right now. They're hard to break. They're driving over them with big caterpillars and they're trying to smash them. And they don't like to be smashed and they just pop right back to where they were. And so it is really time-consuming to figure out how to dispose of them.

**BRANDT:** Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** So does your bill prohibit them from being landfilled in their native state or without being chipped or anything? Or does your bill also prohibit the compaction of them? Chipping them up into little flakes and burying those?

**HARDIN:** The danger, I think, really has to do with protecting our groundwater. That's my biggest concern with all of this, is that if it continues-- as it continues to rain and so on and so forth, no matter what state and what size that material is in, unless there's something

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

that would be done to make sure that our Ogallala Aquifer remains safe, that's the concern, is that whether it is chipped--

**MOSEER:** But is the answer you're-- you don't want any of it there, chipped or shredded or in its entirety.

**HARDIN:** No.

**MOSEER:** OK. So are we going to have turbine blade farms someday where they're all stacked out like Boeing planes in Arizona?

**HARDIN:** That's the great irony, right? And that's why I use the term paradox at the beginning of this, just to say we're doing this for green purposes. And yet at the end of the day, we're ending up with something that nobody wants and it's really large.

**MOSEER:** Maybe you should amend your bill and say that wind turbines all have to be made out of aluminum. Then that would all be recyclable.

**HARDIN:** Or popsicles or something. Yes.

**MOSEER:** Popsicle sticks. Yes. Thank you.

**BRANDT:** Senator Raybould.

**RAYBOULD:** Thank you very much. So can you tell me now how they're treated? I believe they're just treated like regular construction material--

**HARDIN:** Debris.

**RAYBOULD:** --disposal. Yeah.

**HARDIN:** Right. They're just kind of tossed around. And the thing is that they're big, and that's part of what happens when literally every ten years they get the opportunity for what are called the Chapter 45 subsidies. It's basically about a 30% subsidy that comes in and allows these organizations to refurbish the size. And so they get bigger and bigger each time they are replaced. And so they're enormous. And so it-- that's the, the challenge. And I would also-- it wasn't your question, I'm just going to put it on there. I don't have anyone here serving as a proponent with me. But online, there were 18 proponents and 8 in opposition. I would point out that geographically those 18 proponents are mostly from western Nebraska, that would probably be considered for these kinds of things. The 8 opponents to this bill are all from Lincoln and Omaha.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**RAYBOULD:** So I have another question, if I may. How should we dispose of fiberglass boats, you know? Because, you know, boat owners tell that joke, the happiest-- two happiest days of their life, when they buy the boat and when they sell the boat. The question is, I think pretty much fiberglass boats are considered as well, construction, wasted material. And boy, I know we have a lot of boats in Nebraska.

**HARDIN:** Not nearly as many as we have the potential of these. I can tell you that what's interesting is if you go to [nebraskadeedsonline.org](http://nebraskadeedsonline.org) [SIC], that's a website where you can look at the proposed solar and wind projects throughout the state. Not all of the counties participate in that website. About two-thirds of the counties do. And what you will find is a marvelous array, a huge number of proposed sites for both wind and solar across Nebraska. Most of them will never come to fruition.

**RAYBOULD:** So I'm wondering--

**HARDIN:** But nonetheless, it's just to say there's a huge demand for it.

**RAYBOULD:** So I'm wondering, you know, people have had fiberglass boats a lot longer than that they've, the, the wind turbines have been around, despite the fact that we all acknowledge that wind turbine blades are quite large. I mean, I've never heard anyone raise a concern about the carcasses or the disposal of fiberglass boats, which, you know, they've been around for quite some time. So how do you think a regular old windmill should be disposed of?

**HARDIN:** I think that's their problem to figure out. I think they created the problem and we're going to let them figure out how to fix it.

**RAYBOULD:** No, a regular old windmills like my, my grandparents had on their farm that would pump water in the horse troughs and the cattle troughs.

**HARDIN:** We, we have those on our farm. And so we don't have any of those parts, at least in ours. They're, they're wooden and--

**RAYBOULD:** But how should they be-- I guess--

**HARDIN:** --and then some metal.

**RAYBOULD:** Sorry, the question is, how should those type of, you know, regular old windmills be disposed of?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**HARDIN:** But they don't have the disposal problem because they're not made of these materials.

**RAYBOULD:** OK.

**HARDIN:** Yeah.

**RAYBOULD:** Well, I thank you very much.

**BRANDT:** Senator Moser?

**MOSER:** Windmills are mostly all metal, and that's all recyclable. I mean, there's some really old ones that have wood veins.

**RAYBOULD:** Yeah.

**MOSER:** But those can decay or burn, whatever. But, yeah, this fiberglass stuff has a half life of, like, forever. I mean, nuclear waste will decay faster than these wind blades.

**RAYBOULD:** I don't know if that's scientifically true.

**MOSER:** That's an exaggeration.

**RAYBOULD:** Yeah, I would say so. Yeah, I would say so. I think we have a very intelligent audience.

**HARDIN:** OK. We could have that debate later.

**MOSER:** Yeah. We'll have everybody from the hall be back in here.

**DeKAY:** OK. Are there any more questions for the--

**JUAREZ:** I have a quick question, please.

**DeKAY:** Go ahead.

**JUAREZ:** So my question is, what if down the road technology changes and they find a way to recycle something like this? You know, both the panels and the wind turbines. Does that mean we would have to pass a new bill because this is indefinite, that the prohibition is going to continue? Is that how this has been written?

**HARDIN:** Yes. And I-- we blow up statute here every single day. And it's easier to pass a new law than to undig those, those buried turbine blades, which would be headed for what's considered not Lincoln and Omaha.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**JUAREZ:** OK. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Are there any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, Senator Hardin, are you going to be here for closing?

**HARDIN:** I will not. I'm needed elsewhere.

**DeKAY:** OK. So you will be waiving your close?

**HARDIN:** Yes.

**DeKAY:** OK. Thank you. Next, we will have the proponents and then the opponents and then neut-- in the neutral capacity. Could I have a show of hands on who's planning on testifying today for either hearing? OK. Should we go with the five?

**RAYBOULD:** Yeah, I think so.

**MOSER:** Your-- it's your call. I mean, they are trying to find a place to park everybody they can't get across the hall, but--

**DeKAY:** We will-- let's go, let's go with the three-minute testifier, and then we can fill in with questions if we need to. So our first proponent, if you guys want to start sliding toward the front of the room. Our first proponent. Are there any proponents for this? Seeing none, opponents? Seeing none-- are you opponent?

**JOHN HANSEN:** Opponent.

**DeKAY:** OK. Go ahead.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Good afternoon. For the record, my name is John Hansen, J-o-h-n, Hansen, H-a-n-s-e-n, I am the president of Nebraska Farmers Union. And I'm before you today as our organization's president and also our lobbyist. So you have several handouts here to try to help you catch up to speed where we're at relative to this issue. And so you have the latest materials from American Clean Power. One is the November edition, their solar panel recycling and disposal. And I encourage you to read it. It is the most up-to-date information that I'm aware of. And the other handout from American Clean Power is the wind turbine disposal and recycling strategies from October of 2024. And so in the handout that I sent around, I wanted to draw attention to the Nebraska Wind and Solar Conference presentation that we had a year ago in 2023. We had the, the CEO of Advanced 4 Solutions, Paul Brown, and also the chief strategy officer for Carbon Rivers G2G. And one company is from Oklahoma, one is from Tennessee. They both operate

in the Midwest. They both have sizable operations. They do things very differently, but they both recycle and reuse the components of wind turbines. And so the wind turbine blades are, are being cut down and then cut into slits and then, then stacked. And then so they're loaded on trucks and then hauled to their manufacturing plants. So not only did we want to try to get the latest and best information about this really substantial new technologies that are being used, but they're very different technologies. But we also wanted to just establish a relationship with these two companies and encourage them to take a look at being more centrally located where more of the wind turbines are, so they have less transportation costs. And it is our view that Nebraska ought to be open for business and we ought to be encouraging business. And that these are growing businesses, and that based on the total amount of energy needs that our state has right now in announced projects, if we were to double the amount of wind and solar energy that we have developed so far in this state, we would still be far short of meeting all just the current announced projects for different kinds of energy needs and clean-- including clean energy needs, clean hydrogen fertilizer manufacturing plants at Hallam south of town or one in Gothenburg. As well as the Governor's initiatives at Holdrege with the sustainable ag aviation fuels and the bioplastics plant in southeast Nebraska. So we're, we're looking at a dramatic increase in total amount of energy needs in our state. And it should be an all-hands-on-deck kind of approach. So what this kind of legislation does is it partially pulls up the welcome mat to business and says, you're not really welcome to come here. I represent a part of the state that is losing population consistently. Our young folks go to Lincoln. They get a good education, they don't come back home. Which is why I refer to Lincoln as the "rural refugee camp" for our rural youth. And so they follow economic opportunities. They stay here. So when we have an opportunity to bring new capital investment, new tax base, new tax revenues, new good-paying jobs, new farm income to rural communities, that's the prescription for what it is those rural communities need in order to try to continue to broaden and diversify the revenue base and provide additional opportunities. So wind, solar, not the total answer. But they are part of the answer. And we ought to have and we ought to pursue and ought to be clear and purposeful about wanting and needing to have a clear policy that says all hands on deck. And renewable energy can be a part of meeting our state's energy needs. We will not be able to move forward as a state unless we're able to meet our energy needs. And so with that, I would be glad to answer any questions, if you have any.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Any questions from the committee? Senator Hughes.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Vice Chair DeKay. Thanks for coming in, Mr. Hansen. So kind of on your comments in terms of an industry, you're talking wind, solar, renewable energy as a whole, not just the-- because this bill clearly is talking about just the handling of the decommissioning of these items. I mean, I'm assuming it's not like, oh, we're going to-- if we open a landfill that takes blades, now that creates this prosperous job opportunity in the west. Or is that what you're-- are you referring to the industry as a whole, I guess, or are you talking about just the waste management part of it?

**JOHN HANSEN:** One is part of the other. And so--

**HUGHES:** As a whole, then?

**JOHN HANSEN:** Yeah, as a whole. So if you're a company and you're looking at Nebraska and you're saying, what is, you know, what is Neb--

**HUGHES:** I can build it there, but I can't decommission it there.

**JOHN HANSEN:** What is Nebraska's attitude toward moving our manufacturing, our, our harvesting of wind, our, our harvesting of sun in that state? How is the state thinking about that? Are we welcome?

**HUGHES:** So then--

**JOHN HANSEN:** And so this causes, you know, some--

**HUGHES:** Right.

**JOHN HANSEN:** --some hesitancy where I think there need not be any. I think this ought to be a local decision made by local landfills as to whether or not they have the capacity and feel like they're equipped to do that or not.

**HUGHES:** Do you know or can you answer, are our-- the landfills that are taking these now, is, is it only Nebraska product or are we getting possible decommission items from Iowa or other states?

**JOHN HANSEN:** The particulars of what goes where in landfills today is past my pay grade.

**HUGHES:** Yeah, OK. That's fine.

**JOHN HANSEN:** I don't have the information.

**HUGHES:** So then my question--

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**JOHN HANSEN:** And I'm not quite sure where to get it.

**HUGHES:** Yeah, my question would be I don't want to become the dumping ground for all windmills either from all over the United States. Because this is going to be a problem for the whole United States, is what do we do with-- because they do. The blades don't last long. I mean, it's that-- they say it lasts long, but I don't consider 12, 15 years very long. And we're going to have an issue across the United States. We've got to do something with it. So I hope they hurry up on their figuring out how to recycle them or use them better, because bury them to me isn't a very great option either. But thanks for coming in.

**JOHN HANSEN:** You bet.

**HUGHES:** Appreciate it.

**JOHN HANSEN:** And that's why we thought that this new technology was really exciting. And, and we've worked several years to get these folks to come to conference. And they wanted to, they wanted a little more business experience under their belt, I think before they come.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** I don't think the availability of recycling of solar panels really affects Senator Hardin's bill. He just doesn't want them in their entirety buried in the landfill. If they can be recycled, if they want to crush the glass and use it for the aluminum or the selenium or silicon or whatever is in there, that's great. He just doesn't want them buried in their bulk-size in landfills. And from somebody who's been involved in getting a landfill sited, it's very difficult, very politically charged. And so I think we have to guard-- sounds silly-- guard our landfills so that we don't flood them with things. And then we have to go take more good ground somewhere else and build a new landfill. It's very difficult to get those permitted.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Well, Senator, I would, I would just say that as I read the bill, I, I, I look at what just happened with LESs two wind turbines, and I don't see how the bill necessarily does, does that, that you describe. I see it is also discouraging the really small amount of materials were left like, for example, for LES. So I called LES. I called them way earlier, a long time ago, but I called them again this morning just to make sure my notes were fresh. And, and in their case, in those, those turbines, the blades went to the cement

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

co-processing for-- and were broken down and used in cement manufacturing.

**MOSER:** Concrete.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Concrete. And the clean metal was recycled in a, in a steel mill. And the amount of stuff that they had left over was actually very small. I mean, really quite small. And that did go to the landfill. But I don't, I don't see how this bill would allow that. And so even if you have folks that are doing a good job, what do you do with the small amount of residue?

**MOSER:** Well, I guess it would be all in the definition of, of wind turbines and solar panels. But if you recycle 95% of it responsibly and you had some decimal dust left over, you know, I don't think that would be the problem that Senator Hardin is trying to address. I think part of your objection to it is, and correct me if my impression is wrong, but you look at it as kind of a slap toward the renewable energy community, and that's what bristles in your realm of operation.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Well, and from, from my point of view, I'm, I'm working with a lot of different entities in a lot of different spaces. And I, I see, and what I believe to be the, the clear and intended effort to be able to use excessive regulation in order to be able to stop and keep from being in business a, an economically beneficial, lawful, permitted-use business.

**MOSER:** Yeah.

**JOHN HANSEN:** And so I, I look at this--

**MOSER:** That's a nicer way of saying what I said. Thank you.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Well, well, thank you. I've been trying to work on my nice stuff.

**MOSER:** Oh, you're still a star.

**DeKAY:** Senator Raybould.

**RAYBOULD:** Yes. Thank you, Vice Chair. I just want to say, I think in Senator Hardin's bill, he does talk about the component parts not being accepted. They're also prohibited, even if you break it down. I just have one question for you, Mr. Hansen. Thank you very much for coming. Were you able to give Senator Hardin a copy of this that talks

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

about solar panel recycling and "Wind Turbine Disposal and Recycling Strategies." Did he, did he have a chance to get a copy of this?

**JOHN HANSEN:** No, he did not. And I, I've got four bills up today.

**RAYBOULD:** OK.

**JOHN HANSEN:** And so I'm just running. I think I've got seven bills up this week. I'm running woefully behind.

**RAYBOULD:** OK. So I think we can make sure that Senator Hardin gets a copy--

**JOHN HANSEN:** Yes.

**RAYBOULD:** --so that if he has any other concerns--

**JOHN HANSEN:** And I, I have an extra copy that I was going to give him.

**RAYBOULD:** OK, terrific. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Quick question. So with seven bills up, you need more energy, is what you're saying?

**JOHN HANSEN:** I need a lot of things, I think.

**DeKAY:** Any other--

**RAYBOULD:** And corny jokes. Corny jokes to sustain you.

**DeKAY:** Any other questions from the committee? Seeing none, thank you, Mr. Hansen.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Next opponent.

**EDISON McDONALD:** Hello, My name is Edison McDonald, E-d-i-s-o-n M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d. I'm here today representing GC ReVolt, a Nebraska-based renewable energy company dedicated to advancing clean energy solutions. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in opposition to LB121. LB121 proposes to prohibit the land disposal of solar panels and wind turbine blades, effectively restricting the responsible end-of-life management of these materials. While we agree that waste management in the renewable energy sector is a concern, we firmly believe that this bill represents unnecessary government overreach and ignores market-driven alternatives that can effectively

address the issue. At GC ReVolt, we support policies that empower innovation, not regulatory burdens that limit economic flexibility. LB121 imposes blanket restrictions on disposal without providing a clear, market-driven pathway forward for managing these materials. Rather than outright bans, Nebraska should look at policies that encourage recycling and responsible disposal, much like Senator Hughes' LB309, which promotes recycling initiatives for batteries that could also be looked at for renewable energy components. Through advanced recycling technologies, solar panels and wind turbine blades can be repurposed into new products. Mr. Hansen previously mentioned a couple of the vendors who are in this space and doing some really impressive work. I've had the opportunity to talk with them and, you know, I think that that is undoubtedly the way of the future, and I think that those companies should be consulted as we look at moving forward in our waste management plans. Nebraska's landowners and energy producers should not be burdened with these unnecessary regulations that restrict their ability to responsibly manage their property and business assets. This creates an undue burden targeting one industry, particularly burdening rural communities where renewable energy products are absolutely vital. With that, I'll close and take any questions.

**DeKAY:** Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Juarez.

**JUAREZ:** I don't know if you can answer this question, but I'm curious after listening to the speakers today. Like how-- do most states in the country have wind turbines and solar panels? Do you have any idea the percentages of the states that have them?

**EDISON McDONALD:** I do not have good numbers on that. I could get back to you. But I'm pretty sure basically every state in the nation has at least, at least some sort of--

**JUAREZ:** So probably solar, at least, right?

**EDISON McDONALD:** At the very least solar, I would guess.

**JUAREZ:** OK. Because, you know, I'm just-- I think it would be great if instead we would try to take an approach of working with other states, you know, and seeing how together, if there is an issue with recycling efforts, how we could make improvements upon it. I mean, I understand the basic concerns, but also we could definitely take an approach of trying to get a good resolution for it. Especially if there are states that have them far more extensive than ours. I think that would be a great idea.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**EDISON McDONALD:** Yeah. And I know in particular the companies that Mr. Hansen mentioned earlier, as I chatted with them, they spoke about how they'd work with legislators in other states to work on kind of crafting what should these policies look like so that we can really encourage that recycling and reuse of the materials to create a more sustainable industry.

**JUAREZ:** Well, if you find those percentages, I would appreciate it if you would email me the data.

**EDISON McDONALD:** Will do.

**DeKAY:** Are there any other questions from the committee? Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Vice Chair DeKay. Thanks for coming in, Mr. McDonald. Until you threw out my name for my [INAUDIBLE]. I was just going to ask you, do you have wording to change that we could adjust and make it more of a recyc-- require recycling of these things versus just an outright ban? Or do other states have something in play yet?

**EDISON McDONALD:** I don't have language yet. I do remember from some of my conversations, they talked about some of this with a couple of those companies that do this. And I think we should, as I said, reach out to them and work on probably building that language. You know, it'll probably take some time to discuss it. But I think that that is an opportunity we can look at in the next couple of days.

**HUGHES:** I would agree. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Any other questions? Seeing none. Thank you, Mr. McDonald, for being here. Next opponent. Any other opponents? Anybody in a neutral position? Seeing none, Senator Hardin waived a closing. With this bill, there were 18 letters of support, 7 letters of opponents, and nobody in the neutral position. With that, that closes the hearing on LB121. Next up will be LB163, Senator Spivey. Senator Spivey will be here momentarily. We're going to shut the mics down for just a minute. OK. We are good to go. Senator Spivey, you are welcome to open on LB163.

**SPIVEY:** Thank you, Vice Chair DeKay. And thank you, Natural Resources Committee. It's nice to see you all this afternoon. I am Ashlei Spivey, A-s-h-l-e-i S-p-i-v-e-y, representing District 13, which is northeast and northwest Omaha. I'm here today to introduce LB163, which establishes the Nebraska Climate Action Office within the Department of Environment and Energy. So the main components of this

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

bill are to develop a statewide climate action plan by July 2026, which is actually the next step in the process that the department has already been working on, and really act as a quarterback to coordinate-- to coordinate climate initiatives across the state, including all of the agencies, local political subdivisions or governments and community-based organizations, or CBOs. This bill does not impose mandates or regulate behavior. It is not push a specific agenda around climate action, but really builds on the momentum that the department has already been doing. The department actually put in the Nebraska Priority Climate Action Plan, and we did send that out via email, so it wasn't a ton of pages that you all got. And this Priority Climate Action Plan, or the PCAP, provides Nebraska companies, government agencies and subdivisions with a competitive edge when seeking ongoing federal support in addressing climate action. Nebraska's economy relies heavily on agriculture, energy production and natural resources, and all of these sectors are impacted by climate action. As of 2024, 26 states have dedicated a climate office or equivalent agency focused on climate policy, emissions reduction and climate adaption. 48 states have created an actual climate action plan. And then there are states with dedicated climate offices that have collectively secured billions of dollars in federal funding through programs like the Inflation Reduction Act and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. And so Nebraska stands to gain tens of millions of dollars annually in federal funding by having a centralized office and the intention around focused grant coordination and implementation. Many states, including Iowa, Florida and Texas, have successfully used climate offices to secure federal dollars for our state-based projects-- or their state-based projects. In July 2024, Nebraska secured a \$307 million EPA grant, the largest agriculture-based federal award in EPA's history. And I think that's really a testament, again, to the work that the department is doing and the potential here to leverage dollars into our state to continue the work that is in front of us. And so I encourage you to support this bill and moving out of committee so that we can expand federal funding efforts by ensuring Nebraska continues getting these high-impact federal dollars. We can support local governments by having strong coordination and collaboration and then boost economic and environmental gains through reducing energy costs and creating jobs. So I thank you for your time and I welcome any questions?

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Any questions for the committee? Senator Moser.

**MOSER:** Have you had a fiscal note yet for your bill?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**SPIVEY:** Yes, we do have a fiscal note. I think with the fiscal note, they are looking at adding new jobs to be able to manage this. And one of the things that we talked to the department, so it's about \$710,000 is what they have listed. And it's really because of having like these three positions. And so one of the things that we talked to the department about is that y'all are already doing this and it's just not necessarily an intentional, coordinated way. And so is there an opportunity that we can potentially look at an amendment versus having an office, but to be a program and then allocate some of the time of the existing staff into that program so that they can continue to do the work?

**MOSER:** Thank you. That's just what I was wondering, what that number was. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Vice Chair DeKay. Thanks for bringing this in, Senator Spivey. So and I think you-- so that you mentioned NDEE, Nebraska Department of Energy and Environment, I was-- all the words. Last year they did do-- or they did come up with a priority climate action plan. So and you're aware of that.

**SPIVEY:** Yes.

**HUGHES:** So you're, you're saying you're taking that information, you want to build on, on top of it? Is that kind of the--

**SPIVEY:** Yes, absolutely. And then the very last page of that NCAP, the, the, the plan that they currently have, they state that as a next resort, the next step. So the next step is really to build an actual climate action plan for the state. And so this builds on what they have said is necessary to happen next. And again, they did not have necessarily a dedicated staff or an intentional focus in this way. And so this is just kind of refining that to say how do we keep using the momentum and interest that you all are having and doing to then create this plan and like this program or office?

**HUGHES:** And just I'm probably in the same vein with Senator Moser that I hate creating more agencies. So--

**SPIVEY:** For sure.

**HUGHES:** --I'm with you on like, can we-- we have the NDEE, which might be renamed something else here shortly, but like a little program piece under that.

**SPIVEY:** Yeah, absolutely.

**HUGHES:** It made-- it fits, right? It makes sense.

**SPIVEY:** Yeah. And I think for me, office and program would be interchangeable. So it doesn't necessarily have to be a new agency with new leadership, but it's really inside of the organization at our state level that is doing this intentional work. And then we are dedicating staff time around this plan and next steps.

**HUGHES:** Gotcha. Thanks.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Senator Raybould.

**RAYBOULD:** So I was really impressed with the comment about Nebraska securing that \$307 million award from EPA. Could you tell me a little bit more about what the scope of that grant award is going to go for?

**SPIVEY:** Yeah, I can pull that up. I don't have the exact--

**RAYBOULD:** OK.

**SPIVEY:** --information of what the award goes to, so I don't want to misspeak on how they're going to use it within that scope of work. But as I was doing my research, and I'm not an expert in environmental issues or climate action, I'm just passionate about it. And I think it's really important. And what I have seen on the community-based side, for example, Center for Rural Affairs also was able to receive a really big grant from the EPA multi-year around doing some things around climate action. And so it felt like this is a really great opportunity where we have folks at the state level that have brilliant ideas that are getting funded community-based organizations, and how do we have more coordination to create more efficiencies to leverage those dollars together and to be able to collaborate. And so there's a couple other folks that have received federal funding that I'll pull that too and I'll be able to share with the committee around each of those scopes.

**RAYBOULD:** Great. Thank you. And I know the NDEE is a great agency and department to, to really land this. I mean, I can just speak from personal experience. They have been so proactive on other grant funds. NDEE did the launching of funding for installation of electric vehicle charging stations across the state of Nebraska using the Volkswagen emission settlement dollars. And so, you know, they're, they're engaged. And this would be a really good place to make sure that they continue the discussions and promotion and grant award-getting.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**SPIVEY:** Yeah, absolutely, Senator Raybould. And again this is not-- this bill is not because I'm saying they're not doing it. I think they're doing a great job. And that was actually in the NCAP around what they've already been doing. And so my hope is that this puts further intention and support behind the great efforts and leadership that they already have.

**RAYBOULD:** Great. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Are there any other questions? I have one real quick.

**SPIVEY:** Yes.

**DeKAY:** You were-- mentioned early the start of the office and, and then you thought maybe switching it to part of a department at some point in time. But if you open up an Office of Climate Action, how many employees are you-- how much office staff are you anticipating?

**SPIVEY:** So I'm thinking about, and thank you for the question, Vice Chair DeKay, that the-- I think sometimes the language, right, is different. And so in my mind, this would be an office within the department and I think they maybe use the term "program." And so talked to the department about doing an amendment so that's more aligned. And then I think that they already have staff that they can just reappropriate their time to this specific initiative that would be like one and a quarter. And so the bill legislates that at least that, that they dedicate staff. It doesn't give a number at all. They get to decide that based on their purview and their leadership for day-to-day operations.

**DeKAY:** OK. Are there any other questions for Senator Spivey?

**JUAREZ:** I have a question, and I don't know if this is a question you could answer. But I know that in Omaha, the city council, they had an issue of someone in my district who wanted to do car recycling. And of course, there were a lot of opponents that showed up at that meeting. And I'm wondering where would that entity be able to get advice on how to proceed to get some, some support for people who are the experts? Who should they go to?

**SPIVEY:** Yeah, great question, Senator Juarez. So I think for me, like example, city of Omaha just put out a climate action plan. And so in my mind, it would be the city council folks would work with the representative in your district or their constituent to be able to figure that out. And then the-- whether that's Councilman Festersen as

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

the chair would then work with NDEE to say, we have this climate action plan at the city level. Here's what we're hearing. How do we best coordinate? What technical assistance can you offer, what have you seen? And so it feels like that there's an ecosystem of everyone working together and they, and they understand how it works and like their piece of the pie versus sometimes it can feel like I'm head down doing what I'm doing and I'm not necessarily collaborating as efficiently as I could.

**JUAREZ:** Yeah, because, you know, it's already a business that exists in my district. So although I was trying to be respectful of the concerns environmentally, you know, of other constituents in my district, I also wanted to try to provide better guidance to the business that's been there for years.

**SPIVEY:** Yeah.

**JUAREZ:** You know? Because obviously they were frustrated.

**SPIVEY:** Absolutely.

**JUAREZ:** You know, on the, the fight that I'm sure that they saw when they were trying to expand their business and do something new.

**SPIVEY:** Yeah, absolutely. I would reach out to Councilman Festersen, and I do have his contact information since he's the chair of city council, to say like, here's what they're doing around climate action and supporting of folks in the city so that you can better figure out the right response to that constituent.

**JUAREZ:** OK. Thank you.

**SPIVEY:** Of course.

**DeKAY:** Are there any other questions for the senator? Seeing none, are you going to be available to close?

**SPIVEY:** I'm going to let you all just get some time back, so I will not be-- I'll be waiving my close.

**DeKAY:** OK. Thank you.

**SPIVEY:** All right. Thank you all.

**DeKAY:** First, we will have our first proponent.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** Good afternoon, Vice Chair DeKay. My name is Kenneth Winston, K-e-n-n-e-t-h W-i-n-s-t-o-n, and I'm appearing on behalf of Nebraska Interfaith Power and Light. Well, I-- we're, we're in support of LB163, and I thought I'd start off with a quote from Benjamin Franklin where I actually, I've heard Vince Lombardi and Bill Belichick also attributed to this quote. But the quote is, Failure to plan is planning to fail. And basically, the idea is that good planning and coordination is good for the economy and good for the environment. And as Senator Spivey noted, our agricultural economy is highly dependent upon good climate information. As the climate warms and we experience more severe weather events, it's important that farmers and ranchers have good data to make decisions with-- about the kinds of things that they're planning to raise and the kinds of crops they're, they're going to be planting. It could also inform research. And then I guess I'd like to talk a little bit about the, the \$307 million grant that the state got. And I actually have a copy here. I'd be glad to give it to you, Senator Raybould, if-- I only have one copy, but I'd be glad to share it with you, about the way that the funds are allocated. But when the state was awarded a \$307 million grant, Governor Pillen stated, This grant will strengthen our rural communities, our agriculture industry and allow Nebraska to fully realize the potential of full-value agriculture. This grant signifies what can be done when we all come together for Nebraska and her citizens. And let me follow. I'm-- Governor Pillen also stated that this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that would turbocharge best practices. And this is the kind of positive outcomes that LB163 is intended to make reality. Effective planning can also help Nebraskans take advantage to, to of opportunities to address climate issues. For example, as Mr. Hansen can tell us, Nebraska has some of the best wind resources in the country. We're often rated as number three in the country for wind resources, as well as excellent solar resources. Coupled with battery storage, this can provide low-cost, reliable energy for Nebraskans. Wind and solar energy can provide many benefits to Nebraskans. These payments to farmers and ranchers can provide a steady source of income that can help farmers and ranchers stay in business while dealing with the challenges of weather, volatile markets, and rising costs. Wind and solar projects can provide tax revenues to communities, helping reduce local property taxes while paying for schools, roads, and bridges. Many cutting-edge businesses demand renewable energy when deciding where to locate their businesses and facilities. Wind and solar provide the lowest-cost generation resources at the present time. Climate change has its worst impacts on our most vul-- vulnerable residents. Heat waves are especially dangerous for small children and the elderly, and poor people are more

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

likely to live in floodplains and substandard housing because that's what they can afford. I could say more, but I see that my time is running out, so I'd be glad to-- as I said, I have a copy of the ONE RED funding, and I'd be glad to share that with you.

**DeKAY:** I was going to ask if you wanted the page and make more copies.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** Yeah, the page can make copies. That would be great. Yeah.

**DeKAY:** Are you ready to receive questions?

**KENNETH WINSTON:** Yes, I'm ready to respond to questions.

**DeKAY:** Anybody from the committee have ques-- Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Senator or Vice Chair DeKay-- and Senator DeKay. OK, so Nebraska got in July this \$307 million EPA grant. But we didn't-- at the time, we didn't have a climate change office. So I'm assuming it was just with NDEE's help. I guess my question is, do we have to specify a certain office and dedicate certain staff or whatever to it? I kind of went online to the, the-- what do they call it, the red way, I think is what it's called?

**KENNETH WINSTON:** ONE RED.

**HUGHES:** ONE RED, right. Oh, yeah Red Way was the airline.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** ONE RED, yeah. [INAUDIBLE].

**HUGHES:** We don't want to talk about that in here. ONE RED. And it was like, let's promote energy efficiency and electrification incentives for home energy. Like preweatherization incentives for ag, conversion from diesel to electric. I feel like a lot of these things are already going on. Is it-- I mean, I guess I'm wondering, what are we trying to do here that's not already happening?

**KENNETH WINSTON:** Well, I don't want to speak for Senator Spivey--

**HUGHES:** Yeah. And I realize that, and she's not going to be back. And that's fine.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** I don't want to say--

**HUGHES:** I can talk to her off--

**KENNETH WINSTON:** --well, this is what she has in mind because--

**HUGHES:** Sure.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** --you know. But the way that I would envision it is that I know that, that the process that-- when they did the NCAP process where they created this plan, they had hearings all across the state. They solicited input from people all across the state.

**HUGHES:** Right.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** And but the problem, one of the challenges that I saw happening with it was the fact that, that basically they assigned a guy who was working on another program to lead all of this. And this would kind of, this would-- bill, in my mind, would allow someone to be dedicated to work on this, this project as opposed to just saying, OK, this is one more responsibility you have to--

**HUGHES:** Right.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** --field. So, so it would be--

**HUGHES:** OK.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** --the idea of having some directed resources toward this kind of a program. And, and it would, would enable us to do this kind of work and help us to fulfill. The other thing is that this plan, the plan that the state received funding for, hasn't been carried out yet. So this still has to be the, the, the process of making it happen, of, of carrying out the various aspects, the things that you mentioned. And as a matter of fact, most of the funding would go to rural Nebraska. \$160 million to agriculture. Another \$50 million--some to bio-- biogas digesters. So most of the funding is, is targeted towards rural Nebraska. So the idea would be to provide some dedicated expertise in that area.

**HUGHES:** Gotcha. OK. Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Are there any other questions? Seeing none, thank you.

**KENNETH WINSTON:** I had a whole bunch of things I wanted to say. No, thank you, thank you, senators.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Next proponent. Go ahead.

**MIA PERALES:** Dear Chairman Brandt members of the Natural Resources--

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**DeKAY:** Just a second. Could you give us your name and then spell it for us?

**MIA PERALES:** Yes.

**DeKAY:** For the record.

**MIA PERALES:** My name is Mia Perales, M-i-a P-e-r-a-l-e-s, and I am a sophomore environmental engineering major at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. If you saw me come in, I came in late because I actually just got done with class. But I am here today to testify in support of the creation of the Office of Climate Action. As an environmental engineering student, I can attest to the dire need for climate action in Nebraska. We are experiencing record heat every single year, and this is directly related to an increased heat-related deaths and loss of work for people that rely on outdoor work to support their families. We are also experiencing disastrous weather events much more frequently, and I am sure you can attest to the adverse effects. I know I have had family members who have lost their homes or who have had just a lot of disastrous effects on their homes because of flooding, because of tornadoes, et cetera. And for years, scientists have found a direct correlation-- to increased abnormal weather patterns and factors such as pollution and deforestation that cause climate change effects. As a state with high farmer population, it is essential that we take action and protect our people. Disastrous weather, increased heat and droughts, can determine the success of a farmer and their ability to stay afloat and provide for their family. I know there might be a negative connotation to climate action, but this isn't about satisfying a political party. This is about protecting Nebraska's farmers and our economy, which relies on agricultural production. This is about protecting Nebraska's youth and our right to a safe and healthy future. I know some politicians have thought that young people are leaving because of property taxes. But I am here to tell you that it's because our voices aren't being heard and our values aren't aligned with the state in which we are born. One of the great things that the Climate Action Office would propose is creating jobs for people regarding clean energy and things of that nature. And as an environmental engineering student, if I want to stay in Nebraska where my family is, I need those jobs and I need those opportunities. Which is exactly what this bill would create. Thank you for your time and consideration, and I hope that you also support this bill.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Are there any questions from the committee? Senator Raybould.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**RAYBOULD:** Thank you, Ms. Perales, for coming and testifying. You know, I'm kind of curious about the environmental engineering program at UNL. Like how many students are involved, what are the different type of, I guess, categories or subcategories that people are interested in and what type of job you'd like to have when you graduate?

**MIA PERALES:** Yeah. So the environmental engineering program at Lincoln is fairly new, so we do correlate a lot with the civil engineering program. It's been around for less than a decade. So in my class, in my sophomore-level class, there's about 15 other students with this specific environmental engineering path. And for me, what I really like about environmental engineering and why I wanted to go into it, is because it creates actual solutions to the effects that we are seeing from climate change. It's going to have tangible effects on the disasters that we're facing, and it's going to prevent some of those disasters. So for me, I want to go into renewable energy. As Ken mentioned before, Nebraska has a lot of opportunity for wind energy, and it's something that we are honestly behind in. When we look at our neighbors in Iowa, they are championing in wind energy. They get so much of their energy and they provide it at a low cost for their residents. And it's something that I think that we should definitely be capturing on. So that's what I want to go into. But as I previously stated, there aren't many opportunities here right now. And if I want to stay in Nebraska, if I want to be where my family is, then those jobs need to be created somehow.

**RAYBOULD:** OK. Thank you.

**MIA PERALES:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Any other questions for the testifier? Seeing none, thank you.

**JUAREZ:** Thank you for coming.

**MIA PERALES:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Next proponent.

**MEGHAN SITTLER:** Good afternoon. My name is Meghan Sittler, that is spelled M-e-g-h-a-n S-i-t-t-l-e-r, and today I am here on behalf of 12,000 members of Audubon Great Plains in Nebraska to share our support for LB16-- LB163. Audubon Great Plains is a regional office of the National Audubon Society, and the National Audubon Society focuses on the conservation of birds, as well as bringing awareness to the condition of our environment and how those changes in the environment

impact birds, natural resources, our economy and communities. We consider climate change to be a significant threat to birds and communities, and therefore we support as an organization actions that mitigate the risk and impacts of climate change, as well as those that address its causes. As previous testifiers have mentioned or alluded to, over the past ten years in Nebraska, there have been 17 weather-related federal disaster declarations that were mostly floods or fires. And that, that number excludes drought, which declarations for drought are often frequent and persistent. And then the impact of these disasters touch every part of our lives from the water supply to our economy. Audubon Great Plains, we work with producers in communities across the state. We hear through those interactions how much they are realizing or seeing the, the climate change and the impacts on their operation, on their livelihoods, on their well-being. We see that as well in the management, day-to-day management of our own centers and sanctuaries in the state. We are seeing significant, not steep, declines in bird species and changes in the habitat they rely on. We have heard from producers directly that they can't-- they recognize that they need to change or have the creativity, increasing creativity to respond to the conditions, but there are often barriers for them to explore and implement those sustainability solutions. And we've seen and heard questions from producers and community members alike starting to shift from are we going to have more of these historic events to what are the solutions and what actions can we take? LB163 would provide for proactive, integrated and strategic work to address the threats posed by climate change. As the senator mentioned, NDEE completed a priority climate action plan. Audubon Great Plains had the opportunity to participate in the, the public or stakeholder input session, which we appreciate. And we commend the department and the state for the development of the plan, as well as the success in achieving grants and future implementation of that. We feel that the Climate Action Office, through the creation of that plan, office or program, which we would support either, would be in position to build off of that work and advance implementation of key strategies across all sectors in the state. We encourage support of the bill and we thank you for your consideration, and I be happy to take any questions.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Questions. We'll start here. Senator Hughes.

**HUGHES:** Thank you, Vice Chair DeKay. Thanks for coming in, Ms. Sittler. And I think you kind of alluded to it right at the very end. You-- I just have real, and I-- and Senator Spivey said it too, I have a real issue with creating a whole new office and a whole new, you know, bureaucratic structure. I feel like a lot of this is getting

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

addressed somewhat in our NDEE group. I'm wondering if-- I mean, do you feel like they're doing some things already or do you think we're really lacking in terms of--

**MEGHAN SITTTLER:** Well, I think they are doing things. But I think the key part of this is that--

**HUGHES:** Just a coordinated--

**MEGHAN SITTTLER:** --that focus, that integrated approach. I mean, it's such a broad-ranging issue impacting so many states, as well as having a central this is who you go to regardless of whether you're an ag producer--

**HUGHES:** Kind of a point person or whatever.

**MEGHAN SITTTLER:** --or a community member as well as a point person externally as, as the testifiers and the senator mentioned, to receive federal funds, should they be available, or other funding to help further the programs.

**HUGHES:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Any other questions? Thank you.

**MEGHAN SITTTLER:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Next proponent.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Mr. Vice Chairman, members of the committee, again, for the record, my name is John Hansen, J-o-h-n, Hansen, H-a-n-s-e-n, I am the president of the Nebraska Farmers Union and also their lobbyist. So, gee, do farmers care much about the weather? Oh yeah, they do. They talk about it all the time. They wish somebody would do something about it. And so as you, as you go along and we have all these weather events, and you look at the severe weather that happened last July 31st and you look at the damage that went on from that, that LES paid for. It was the most-- one of the second-most expensive storms in their history. Went on to be the most expensive storm by far in the history of OPPD. We're just, we're getting used to the whole business of just one ongoing weather, extreme weather event after another. And so every once in a while I ran across an article that actually has numbers in it. And I love numbers. So I also have some insurance responsibilities in my professional life. And so when I, when I see the big kid on the block right down the street here, that is Farmers Mutual, who is the, the largest property insurer in Kansas and

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

Nebraska, when they're willing to put numbers out for the press and say things, and that's why I've highlighted this particular article through-- it's just the documentation of just one out of, out of the normal range of losses after another. And, and saying that-- their president said that Farmers Mutual, which is the largest insurer of farm property in Nebraska and South Dakota and the second largest insurer of homes in Nebraska, is facing a \$125 million underwriting loss for 2022. Its previous largest loss in its 131-year history was \$25 million. These are, you know, these are actuarial numbers based on real world losses. So the other article explains what is going on. We have the second-highest average increase in home real estate insurance rates. This, this is the world that I live in. So when you look at those kinds of things going on, plus I went through-- I'm a survivor of helping provide services through the 2019 flood, which pretty much consumed my year. Would it be helpful to the state of Nebraska to have somebody who's in charge of trying to figure out how much of that \$10 billion that we just passed in Congress that is geared toward ag natural resource losses-- \$21 billion goes to just natural resource losses. We can bring money into our state that's not-- that is for rebuild, that is for helping mitigate natural disasters. All of those kinds of things, because we have them. So if there's money available, whether it's through USDA or whether through the national disaster program, that was the \$100 billion that was just passed or whatever it is, if we can do a better, more focused, job of trying to bring-- bring more money back to the table to help agriculture in our state, this is penny-wise, pound-foolish in our opinion not to do it. We ought to be doing this. We're doing a pretty good job now. We can always do just a little better.

**DeKAY:** All right.

**JOHN HANSEN:** I'll be glad to answer any questions.

**DeKAY:** Thank you, sir. Are there any questions for Mr. Hanson? Seeing none, thank you, sir.

**JOHN HANSEN:** Thank you very much.

**DeKAY:** Next proponent.

**JUAREZ:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Any other proponents? First opponent, then. Any opponents? Seeing none, anybody testifying in a neutral capacity?

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Just have to switch, switch my goggles out here. Good afternoon. My name is Jeff McCaslin, J-e-f-f M-c-C-a-s-l-i-n, I am a mechanical engineer and I live in Omaha. I'm speaking on behalf of ASHRAE, which is the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers. We're a professional and technical society of more than 54,000 members dedicated to energy efficiency, indoor air quality, resiliency and sustainability in the built environment. That means we're HVAC engineers. Through our society's research standards, writings, publishing, certification and continuing education, ASHRAE shapes tomorrow's built environment today. As one of the premier subject matter experts on the built environment and on behalf of our nearly 400 members in the state of Nebraska, we wish to provide comments on LB163 to the, the Committee of Natural Resources. If passed, LB163 would, would create the Office of Climate Action, and the new office would be mandated to work with stakeholders to enhance the provision of technical, technical support, education and skills related to combating climate change in Nebraska. ASHRAE sees ourselves as one such stakeholder. We wish to communicate to the committee that ASHRAE will make itself available as a technical resource to the Office of Climate Action if such an office is created. This legislation explicitly calls for stakeholder engagement, we wish to convey that stakeholders are standing by. We want to proactively make sure the committee knows that ASHRAE is willing to serve you individually, this committee, this Legislature, and potentially the Office of Climate Action, and that we can contribute subject matter expertise related to the HVAC and built environment. ASHRAE produces standards, guidelines and training that will be beneficial to Nebraska, including standards on energy efficiency, building performance benchmarking, energy audits and wildfire smoke protection. We would be happy to share more information about these resources and the expertise that went into creating those resources with you. We're at your disposal to answer any questions and to address any comments or concerns you might have. We'd like to make ourselves avail-- available to you at any time you find yourself in need in subject matter expertise on building sciences and the built environment. We can be reached locally or nationally and govern-- govaffairs@ashrae.org. On behalf of our 54,000 members worldwide and nearly 400 members in Nebraska, we'd like to thank you for the consideration of our comments. I'd be happy to take any questions.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Are there any questions? Senator Raybould.

**RAYBOULD:** Thank you, Mr. Caslin for coming-- McCaslin.

**JEFF McCASLIN:** That's right.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**RAYBOULD:** Yeah. I deal with a lot of heating and air conditioning issues in my other real life, and I was just curious, so do some of your members participate in geothermal projects?

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Yes, absolutely. That's-- we have a number of initiatives among which are decarbonization electrification. And, and part of what we do is finding the new creative ways to create better solutions. And, and geothermal is certainly one of them. We see a lot of potential in, in using heat pumps, whether using generate-- using geothermal as a, as a heat source or even waste heat from wastewater coming out of buildings. So the-- I'm a heat and energy guy myself. And any time I see heat not being used, I'm trying to find a way to reclaim it. So yes, ma'am.

**RAYBOULD:** OK. Thank you.

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Thank you.

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Any other questions? Senator Juarez.

**JUAREZ:** I just had a quick question, please. I'm new to Natural Resources, so could you spell for me the entity that you represent, please?

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Absolutely. ASHRAE is A-S-H-R-A-E.

**JUAREZ:** And do you just have, have an office in Omaha?

**JEFF McCASLIN:** We have-- we don't have an office. We're, we're a community organization. We have a main headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, and we have--

**JUAREZ:** OK.

**JEFF McCASLIN:** --a government affairs office in Washington, DC. Our efforts here are done locally by, by members who volunteer their time.

**JUAREZ:** OK. And about how long has the entity exist, would you say? Any idea, idea on that?

**JEFF McCASLIN:** I, I believe 80 to 90 years. We've been around for a long time.

**JUAREZ:** OK. Thank you.

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Thank you very much.

Transcript Prepared by Clerk of the Legislature Transcribers Office  
Natural Resources Committee January 30, 2025

**DeKAY:** Thank you. Are there any other questions from the committee?  
Thank you, sir.

**JEFF McCASLIN:** Thanks for your time.

**DeKAY:** Next person testifying in a neutral capacity. Anyone else in the neutral? OK. Thank you. Senator Spivey waived closing. With that, there were 100, I think-- 121 record of comments submitted, 57 proponents and 64 opponents. No one in a neutral capacity. With that, that ends the hearing on LB163. And also with that, that ends our hearings for today. Thank you.