

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE TO SCREEN CANDIDATES  
FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY BOARDS OF TRUSTEES**

**SCREENINGS**

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

1:30 p.m.

209 Gressette Building

1101 Pendleton Street

Columbia, South Carolina

Committee Members Present:

Senator Harvey S. Peeler, Jr., Chairman

Representative William R. "Bill" Whitmire, Vice-Chairman

Senator Thomas C. Alexander

Senator J. Yancey McGill

Senator Robert W. Hayes, Jr.

Representative Peter McCoy

Staff:

Martha Casto

Julie Price

(1:32 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: I would like to call the meeting to order. This is a meeting of the Joint Legislative Committee to Screen Candidates for College and University Boards of Trustees. I would like to get ahead and get started.

To my right, Representative Whitmire serves on the Committee with us. He represents the House of Representatives today. Some of the others couldn't make it.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: They got lost.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Then we have Senator Tom Alexander, Senator Yancey McGill, and Senator Wes Hayes. I'm Harvey Peeler. I would like to welcome everyone.

First, under Tab A, we have Connie Dittrich from Daniel Island, the Old Exchange Building Commission at-large seat that expires 2018.

Ms. Dittrich, if you would, come forward, take a seat, and make sure your green light is burning. If you push that, that turns your microphone on.

Is it burning?

MS. DITTRICH: It is.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Good. I can hear you. Welcome, Ms. Dittrich. I will tell you, before we get started, I need to swear you in. So if you would, please raise your right hand.

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole, truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. DITTRICH: I do.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Welcome again.

If you would like to share with the Committee why you would like to serve on the Old Exchange Building Commission.

MS. DITTRICH: Thank you for having me. I am very desirous of serving on the Old Exchange Building Commission -- board for a couple of different reasons.

The first is because I have known about it most of my life. My mom grew up in Charleston, and I visited the city for my whole life, although, of course, it wasn't open for visitors when I was a little girl, 60 years ago. But it's an icon, historical icon, in the city, and I would like to help be able to preserve that in any way that I can. That's my first reason.

The second reason is that Charleston is such a gem, and I make my living there, and I think that being able to, you know, know that one of the important area -- one of the important tourist attractions in our city, in that city, is well taken care of, is something that, you know, we can all know is being taken care of. And I am anxious to be able to contribute to that.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you, ma'am.

Any questions from members of the Committee?

I didn't ask you. Do you have --

MS. CASTO: Mr. Chairman, I do want to let y'all know, the Old Exchange Building has three members that are elected by the General Assembly. There are two seats that are up in January, and there are two at-large seats. So Ms. Dittrich is an at-large candidate.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Very good.

Well, I appreciate your willingness to serve. What's the desire of the Committee?

SENATOR HAYES: Favorable report.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Motion is a favorable report.

Is there a second?

SENATOR MCGILL: Second.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: A second is heard.

All in favor, raise your right hand; and it is unanimous.

Thank you.

Now we have Laura Kennedy LeGrand.

Good afternoon.

MS. LeGRAND: Good afternoon.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you for your appearance.

If you would, please raise your right hand.

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. LeGRAND: I do.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Would you like to share with the Committee why you would like to serve?

MS. LeGRAND: Yes, I would. I have served on the Commission before. I was on the Commission for 12 years for the National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution.

When I resigned from the DAR, of course, I lost my seat from the Commission and I miss it a whole

[SJ]

lot. I just love it. I have heard of the Old Exchange as long as I have been in the DAR, and I was very fortunate to be elected to the Commission through the DAR. And we have done a lot of good things down there, and there are a lot of good things still going on.

I would like to see the Old Exchange recognized nationwide, not just by the State of South Carolina. And if I can get back on there, I would strive to put us in the forefront, along with Independence Hall and Faneuil Hall.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Very good.

Questions, comments?

Staff, do you have anything you would like to add or ask?

MS. CASTO: No, sir. I think she told you she has been on the Commission. She chaired the Old Exchange Commission.

MS. LeGRAND: Yes.

MS. CASTO: And she -- you did say that you were retired. Where are you retired from?

MS. LeGRAND: Well, I resigned from DAR. No, I have been fortunate in that I have never worked. I have been a stay-at-home mom pretty much.

MS. CASTO: Great. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Trust me, that's work.

MS. LeGRAND: That's work.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Whitmire has a question or comment.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mrs. LeGrand, can you tell me where sources of funding come from for the Old Exchange Building?

MS. LeGRAND: Right now, the Exchange -- of course, I have not been on for two years, but I understand they are still doing well.

Right now we are independent; but according to our lease, the State of South Carolina is supposed to support us; but we are no longer an item on the budget.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Well, hopefully that will change.

MS. LeGRAND: Oh, I hope.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: I just wanted to let you know that the DAR school is in my district. I just want to say thank you for everyone associated with the DAR for keeping it going. It is a wonderful school.

MS. LeGRAND: Thank you. Tamassee is a wonderful school.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Representative McCoy is here.

Welcome, sir.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good to be here.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Maybe you don't wear a watch.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Tell the judge that where I was.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: That's called House time.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: That's right.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Well, my daughter is going in or going through the process to become a member of the DAR. I'm glad she did that because she shared with me my ancestry, and I didn't find out until about a month ago, Senator from York, that my fifth granddaddy back was Colonel Frederick Hambright who was a revolutionary war hero that fought at the Battle at Kings Mountain.

[SJ]

MS. LeGRAND: You need to be in the SAR.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: I have an old picture I will get you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Okay, good.

That's what she said.

What's the desire of the Committee?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Motion for a favorable report.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Seconded.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Seconded.

All in favor raise your right hand.

It's unanimous.

You are found to be qualified.

MS. LeGRAND: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you, ma'am.

I tell you, I know the next -- we are supposed to have Francis Marion, but I would like to skip to the South Carolina State University Fifth Congressional District. So if there is no objection, we will go to those now. South Carolina State, Fifth Congressional District, under Tab E.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: And then we will come back to it?

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Then we will come back to it.

Tab E, Tammy Adams Kelly from Sumter.

MS. Kelly.

Welcome.

MS. KELLY: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: If you would, please raise your right hand.

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. KELLY: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Would you like to share with the Committee why you would like to serve on the South Carolina State Board?

MS. KELLY: I sure would. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share with you today.

My desire to be on the board stems from a long, long history of love and passion for South Carolina State University through my husband, who is a 1986 proud bulldog. I also have two children who are matriculating at South Carolina State University, and that love that they exude for the university is just phenomenal, and seeing what they have accomplished as young people at the university is just awesome.

Now, with the leadership at the university, I think my role as a board member would be to help make sure that the university is there for the next 100 years. What is going on today will magnify itself in growth and development for the university.

And I would like to use my leadership skills to help grow the university and retain students so that it will be there forever.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Questions or comments from members of the Committee?

Mr. McCoy.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[SJ]

Ms. Kelly, I appreciate your time and appreciate you coming in front of us today, and I appreciate your willingness to serve as well.

Can I ask you a brief question about your -- I understand that you serve on the Sumter County Economics Development Board.

MS. KELLY: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: What does that mean?

MS. KELLY: My service on the economic development board, I'm a board member on the board, and this is my second term. And basically I help our executive -- our executive for our development board -- well, the development for Sumter County, ensure that Sumter is number one on the minds of anyone who wants to do business in South Carolina. And we help ensure that happens by working with our board and also our executive director for economic development.

And if you have not -- I'm sure you have heard about our huge investment in our economy by Continental Tire. We are on -- the one in Sumter, and it is because of what we do as a board.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: I think that's excellent work, and I am aware of that. So that's kudos to your board for bringing Continental Tire to town.

Is that a position that is -- and just because I don't know, is it something appointed by your local delegation or county council? How does that work?

MS. KELLY: I'm actually appointed by our mayor. I am the city representative on the board, and it is a volunteer position.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Perfect. I think that your qualifications with the economic development board would be a huge asset to the board here as well. So thank you for offering your services.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Martha indicates that would not be dual office.

MS. CASTO: Since she is appointed by the mayor.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Senator Alexander.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Good afternoon.

I'm reading your statement, and it talks about access to public education. How do you think your serving on the board, you can help young people have access to higher education?

MS. KELLY: Sure.

Access to public education, we take for granted that everyone has a -- everyone does have an opportunity to attend an university. However, the university has to be available and accessible to students.

I grew up in a very rural area. I grew up in Dorchester County; and of course, I live in Sumter County now. But as a young girl growing up and not having very much, I did not know -- and also being the first person from my family to actually attend college -- I graduated from the University of South Carolina. And my passion has always been that I do not want to see someone who has the opportunity and missed the opportunity to go to college. Like -- and I know you -- you saw my statement. And I told you about my father.

My father was a brilliant man; and had he had that opportunity to go through to college, he would have gone. And I think that there are a lot of children who are missing that opportunity because without -- without having the proper counseling and access. That university -- South Carolina State University needs to be in Orangeburg and it needs to stay there because of the community that benefits from it.

[SJ]

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Mr. Hayes has a comment or question.

SENATOR HAYES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you. I appreciate your willingness to serve on the board. I am sure you are aware because of your history with the board, recently South Carolina State has had some problems. The -- I think there have been some charges that have ended up in some criminal charges down there with some of the administrators or board members. I think all the incumbents were defeated this past year when they came up for election down at the board, which is most unusual in the General Assembly.

What do you see as your role as -- if you are elected as a board member in relation to the administration? And that's the first part of that.

The second is, What do you think needs to be done to keep South Carolina State moving in the right direction?

MS. KELLY: Well, I will answer the first part of the question first.

The first thing that needs to be done, obviously, is to support the administration, support what President Elzey is doing. And the number one problem right now -- obviously there are a lot of budget concerns there -- is money.

You know what? I run a business. I run my own business. There are always going to be challenges, and I like to say, Challenges are opportunities. But number one, as a board member, I would like to see that the school focus on making sure that they grow the student enrollment -- it can be done -- and also work towards those efforts as far as retaining those students that are there.

It's a wonderful opportunity, and the story just needs to be told.

I understand what's happened with the -- what's happened in the past. Every organization goes through bad times. That's the reality of it. That's the reality, but now it's time to move forward and really, really work towards making it the place that it can be.

SENATOR HAYES: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Senator McGill.

SENATOR MCGILL: I will move for a favorable report.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Motion for a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Second.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Seconded.

All right. Any other questions? We are ready to vote.

All in favor raise your right hand.

Thank you. Unanimous.

MS. KELLY: Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you for your willingness to serve.

Ms. Redish is not here yet, so let's go back to Francis Marion, Tab C. Mary Mappus Finklea, At-Large Seat Number 9.

Is the green light still shining?

MS. FINKLEA: It is.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you. Welcome.

Please raise your right hand.

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

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MS. FINKLEA: I do.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Would you like to share with the Committee why you would like to serve on the Francis Marion Board?

MS. FINKLEA: Yes, I would. Thank you very much.

Good afternoon. It is a joy to be here with you today. To answer in a word, civic duty. I feel that it is important to be engaged in your community. I live in Florence, and this is hometown territory in the sense that what happens on the campus is -- affects the community. I feel like public education affects us all and that we want the best for Francis Marion.

I am excited about the new partnership with Mt. Pleasant as we continue to think about growing and expanding. So it is a nice time to see how the vision of the board can really connect with people on the ground and make a difference in the lives of others.

I appreciated what the other lady spoke about just a moment ago, about first-generation college students. Francis Marion, of course, engages people who -- many of which might not normally be heading to a college or university setting. We do that well, and I'm excited about seeing how we can continue to excel.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Questions or comments?

I always feel a right strange, I guess, swearing in a pastor; but you answered it quite well.

MS. FINKLEA: That's right.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Oh, me.

No questions or comments?

What's the desire of the Committee?

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Favorable.

SENATOR MCGILL: Second.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Motion is for a favorable report. A second is heard.

All in favor raise your right hand.

It is unanimous.

Thank you very much.

MS. FINKLEA: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Now we will go back to South Carolina State University, Fifth Congressional District, under Tab F, Ms. Carlotta Denise Redish.

Ms. Redish, if you would, come forward.

Is your green light burning?

MS. REDISH: Yes, it is.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Good. If you would, take a seat.

Welcome. If you would, please raise your right hand.

Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

MS. REDISH: I do.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Would you like to share with the Committee why you would like to serve on the South Carolina State Board?

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MS. REDISH: Yes, but first let me say, thank you, Chairman and fellow committee members, for affording me this opportunity to participate in the screening process.

I am a life-long educator. I was born and raised in Cherokee County. I got -- I received a great education there. And when I was approached to apply to serve on the board at South Carolina State University, I thought long and hard about it because I'm familiar with what has been going on at the university. But I do believe that my educational and professional experiences will add value to that board.

I have served in various administrative capacities in public school districts in South Carolina and larger urban school districts in Los Angeles and Atlanta before returning back to South Carolina. And I came back here because I love Gaffney. I'm from Gaffney, and that's my home.

Also, professionally, I have had the opportunity to manage and direct and supervise personnel, maintenance, finance, food services, custodial and other departments. So I really do believe that those experiences, combined together and in working collaboratively in conjunction with the other board members in an effort to adhere to existing policies, will prove to add value to the university.

But more importantly, I want to say that the -- my successes that have come to me professionally, I did not achieve the positions that I served by myself. I have been successful through working collaboratively together with my peers and educators across this state.

I have served on the Executive Committee for the Instructional Leaders Roundtable for SCASA, and that's a position that I was approached about running for, and my peers in those positions across the 85 (sic) counties here elected me to that position.

I have also served and was elected to serve as president of the Personnel Roundtable for the Old English Consortium which meets -- we used to meet in York. That's composed of Chesterfield, Lancaster, Rock Hill, York, Cherokee, Clover, and Fort Mill.

So I have experienced a great deal of successes in the realm of education, but it's been through the encouragement and with the support of my peers and through working together with them.

I have also been approached and had the privilege of serving on communities for several local colleges. Primarily I was on the advisory board for Spartanburg Community College. At that time Dr. Para Jones was the president. I also served on an advisory committee at the University of South Carolina Upstate.

So I do believe that I will add value to the board. I do believe that my professional and educational experiences will enable me to make impartial and very well-informed decisions as we strive -- should I get the seat, as we strive to return South Carolina State University to the status that it once had.

And that university was once a -- a stellar university in this state, and it was very, very well respected throughout these United States. It is still a good school where you have dedicated facility and staff members there who are doing a good job. They are working very hard. And to put it in the words of former Supreme Court -- United States Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, I believe they are doing the best they can with what they have. And I would love to have the opportunity again to participate in the governing process there on that university by serving on the board of trustees.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

Any questions or comments?

Mr. Whitmire.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Thank you for your willingness to serve.

I'd like to thank both of you ladies. It is really a pleasure to have, in my opinion, outstanding  
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candidates for SC State. They have been needing some good leadership for quite awhile. It is kind of a shame -- I wish both of you were running for separate seats.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: I was thinking the same thing.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Let me ask you something else.

Are you familiar with the inner workings of SC State? Why do you think it went from up here to down here, in your opinion?

MS. REDISH: Well, I reviewed the SACS accreditation report. I'm currently reviewing a SACS review team. We might be looking at a school in the district of Hilton Head Island in March of next year.

I looked at the findings in the report, and the report cited board governance issues. And I think the most important thing for any board member within any institution or any organization, the thing that we have to keep in mind is that each board member has a vote, and that one vote does not constitute any unequal level of power. That one vote's -- that one vote gives us leeway and insight to work collaboratively together as a cohesive team to -- to meet our mission and our goals that have been established and are stated in the strategic plans.

You know, a strategic plan is just a road map that looks at where the university has been, where they are now, and where they are going. And I have looked at and I'm very familiar with the history of South Carolina State University.

It's -- that school has produced some of the most famous people in these United States. We have brigadier generals that have come out of State, and one I know personally. We used to bowl and skate together, and he went in the military.

And he said, Carlotta, I am going to be a general one day. Lo and behold, we know he just retired. He's a brigadier general that has just retired. We have Supreme Court justices that came out of that university.

So somewhere along the way, we've gone from being at the top of the list and being very, very stellar to -- I'm sorry, to losing sight of the mission.

The mission is providing those students with the very, very best possible education and working together cohesively and as one unit to further meet the goals of that university, particularly by adhering to policy.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Thank you.

MS. REDISH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Senator Alexander.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Following up, I was already thinking about it when you said that last word, "policy."

MS. REDISH: Yes.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: The board sets policy.

Is it appropriate for a board to have any other -- what is your view of any other role that the board has as far as the day-to-day operation of the university?

MS. REDISH: Yes, sir.

It's the president's responsibility. President Elzey, it is his responsibility to manage the daily operations of South Carolina State University. That is what I call his sand box.

And then in the other sand box, you have board members who are charged with developing, implementing and addressing policy. They work with the president in identifying policy and working

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with him to adhere to those policies that have been established. But board members, again, they are to work cohesively together in the establishment, creation and adherence to of board policies.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: With your experience in the public school system and from that standpoint, is -- is it your thoughts then that any communication to -- regarding the university should go through the president rather than directly with other folks throughout the university system?

MS. REDISH: Yes. There is -- I do believe in following protocol because -- in doing so, if we all do that and we stay in our -- we stay in our lane and we follow protocol, then we will avoid the pitfalls that come often with miscommunication, misdirected communications.

The president, again, is charged with managing the daily operations. And communications should go to the president and from the president to the board. And specifically, the president of the board and the president of the university should be, in essence, hooked at the hip because they should be able to communicate any time of the day regarding any matter or any situation without being pressured or influenced to sway their true thoughts and feelings and ideals regarding any particular matter at hand.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Senator McGill, anybody else?

As the screening committee, our charge is to sift through the candidates, I guess.

MS. REDISH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: And one thing, it is not just you, but several of our candidates for these boards of trustees, their driving record.

I see where you had five speeding tickets, young lady.

MS. REDISH: Oh, did I?

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: From '08 to '12.

MS. REDISH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: I know that shouldn't have a bearing on how you are going to vote or if you are fortunate enough to be elected. But -- and we have talked about this before. How many is too many? Is two too many? Is three?

MS. REDISH: But I can explain.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Okay. Explain.

MS. REDISH: I recently purchased a new car, and my goal was not to buy a fast car. I wanted to buy an efficient car that had a luxury feel and economical car for me and my daughter. Well, that car, it turned out to be a very fast car. So I think two of the tickets I obtained were within the first -- well, one, first three weeks or a month within purchasing that car.

The second explanation I have, and I will give you a good example. One night I was leaving from a revival in the Duncan, Lyman, Wellford area. And I was in a church, leaving a church that was out in a rural area that I was not accustomed to, and I had just changed my contact lenses to multi-lens, where one is for distance and one is for vision. And I just -- it was in a dark area and no lights, and I didn't come to a complete stop at a railway crossing.

And then the other tickets were -- excuse me.

The other tickets I got in my travels from meetings across the state, and sometimes I just -- I didn't remember where the speed traps were.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: I understand.

[SJ]

MS. REDISH: Not speed traps, but I just didn't recall where you would have a high population of highway patrolmen sitting and monitoring those areas.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: I understand.

Most of them is in Senator McGill's district.

SENATOR MCGILL: You would have been better off to say I have a heavy foot.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Well, I was going to say, that fast car, you know, it don't move unless you put your foot on the gas.

But anyway, that's the only thing I found I had to fuss at you about.

MS. REDISH: I am sorry. I apologize.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Slow down.

MS. REDISH: I haven't had a ticket in a while, though.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: What's the desire of the Committee?

REPRESENTATIVE McCOY: Move as favorable.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: The motion is a favorable report.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Second.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: A second is heard.

All in favor raise your right hand.

And it is unanimous.

Thank you for your willingness to serve. I will echo Mr. Whitmire's comment. I wish both of you would serve.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: The one that is not successful, please reapply.

MS. CASTO: Two at-large seats coming up.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Two at-large coming up, so remember that.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: It is refreshing to know that we have candidates of y'all's caliber. Really, true.

MS. REDISH: Thank you very much.

REPRESENTATIVE WHITMIRE: Very encouraging.

CHAIRMAN SENATOR PEELER: Subject to the call of the chair, we will stand adjourned.

(The screenings adjourned at about 2:56 p.m.)