

https://omaha.com/news/state-and-regional/govt-and-politics/omaha-lincoln-law-enforcement-testify-against-constitutional-carry-gun-bill/article_cf750254-7a1a-11ec-b81d-1f4a3a65fb8d.html

EDITOR'S PICK TOPICAL ALERT TOP STORY

Lincoln, Omaha law enforcement testify against 'constitutional carry' gun bill

From the What you missed this week in notable Southeast Nebraska crimes and court cases series

Sara Gentzler Omaha World Herald

Jan 20, 2022



Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon reads legislation on the first day of the 2022 session. On Thursday, he said he will work with law enforcement officials to address their concerns with his bill allowing Nebraskans to carry a concealed handgun without a permit.

GWYNETH ROBERTS, THE JOURNAL STAR

Sara Gentzler Omaha World Herald

The legislation, proposed by Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon, would allow anyone to concealed carry a firearm without a permit.

Omaha and Lincoln law enforcement officials Thursday spoke out against a legislative bill that would allow Nebraskans to carry concealed handguns without permits, saying it would make their jobs harder and jeopardize public safety.

It's an issue that, in some other states, has put police and gun rights advocates in opposing camps.

But the bill's sponsor, Sen. Tom Brewer of Gordon, said at a public hearing of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee that he is working with law enforcement officials to address their concerns.

LB773 would allow people who aren't otherwise banned from having guns to carry concealed weapons without clearing current hurdles: passing a criminal background check, paying a \$100 fee, and taking an eight- to 16-hour gun safety class.

Policies such as this are called "constitutional carry" laws in reference to some gun rights advocates' belief that the U.S. Constitution gives people the right to carry concealed guns.

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- 3 **Juvenile killed in rollover crash near Seward, sheriff's office says**
- 4 **Paperwork, finger-pointing and Twitter: How Gretna was stripped of the Class A football title**

At least 21 states have already passed such laws, including every state surrounding Nebraska except Colorado. As of Jan. 1, more than 85,500 Nebraskans were licensed to carry concealed weapons.

People could still obtain permits to carry concealed weapons, Brewer said, which they may want to do to carry a gun across state lines or potentially expedite a background check for purchasing a gun. Where guns are allowed wouldn't change, he said, and neither would laws that say you can't have a gun with alcohol or drugs in your system.

Proponents argue that the current requirements are unnecessary barriers to a fundamental right and that the costs of getting a permit and taking a class are unfair to low-income people.

“The right to keep and bear arms should not be treated like a second-class right,” Brewer said.

Those who testified in favor of the bill included gun rights advocates and instructors.

John Lott, a well-known gun rights advocate and economist, argued that the wait time for a permit is too long for someone who wants a gun urgently, such as a victim of stalking, and said "poor minorities" would benefit most from the bill.

Groene sponsors medical marijuana bill; opponents blast it as a 'poison pill'

Lott and Brewer wrote a recent op-ed in the Omaha World-Herald making many of the same arguments. (Lott co-wrote a very similar op-ed with a Florida state lawmaker published by the Orlando Sentinel last month, which attracted a rebuttal arguing that Lott's analysis was error-filled. Sen. Adam Morfeld of Lincoln also challenged data that Lott presented at the hearing.)

Those in opposition included representatives of the Omaha police union, the Omaha Police Department and the Lincoln Police Department. Lincoln Police Chief Teresa Ewins also conveyed opposition from the Police Chiefs Association of Nebraska and the Police Officers Association of Nebraska.

They worry that the bill would counteract local efforts to reduce gun violence and hinder their ability to seize illegal guns.

"Without a permitting process and training, you'll have individuals who shouldn't be carrying and carrying without the proper skills necessary to assess the situation and determine when the lethal force is lawful," Ewins said.

Anthony Conner, president of the Omaha Police Officers Association, said he spoke with the president of the police union in Kansas City, Missouri, after a similar bill passed there and was told that it made it harder to seize guns from criminals. He said homicides have doubled there since the bill passed.

"We must oppose this bill as it's currently written," Conner said. "But I thank Sen. Brewer for his sincere interest in our concerns, his stated dedication to find a common ground, and I'm hopeful that we can do just that."

Resolution calling for convention of states advances to final-round debate

Brewer suggested that submitted comments would be more indicative of Nebraskans' view on the issue. An updated tally after the hearing counted 202 proponents of the bill, 32 opponents and two people who considered themselves "neutral."

Last year, Brewer introduced a bill to let all but Nebraska's three largest counties — Douglas, Lancaster and Sarpy — decide whether to allow permitless concealed carry. He ditched that effort after Nebraska Attorney General Doug Peterson raised constitutional concerns about delegating a state matter to county boards.

Brewer gave this year's broader bill his priority designation, increasing the likelihood that it will be debated. If the committee does not vote to advance the bill, Brewer said he would pursue a "pull motion" to get the bill to the floor of the Legislature for debate. That would require approval from 30 of the 49 senators.

Nineteen senators had signed onto LB773 as co-sponsors as of Thursday's hearing. If the bill makes it to the floor, it would need to survive three rounds of debate and approval.

Gov. Pete Ricketts pledged, during a town hall meeting organized by the National Rifle Association last year, to sign a statewide constitutional carry bill if it gets to his desk.

More than 100 new bills include restrictions on abortion pill

Meet the Nebraska state senators



Nebraska has 49 state senators in the Legislature. Click through to find your state senator and others.



State Sen. Julie Slama

District: 1

From: Peru

Party: Republican

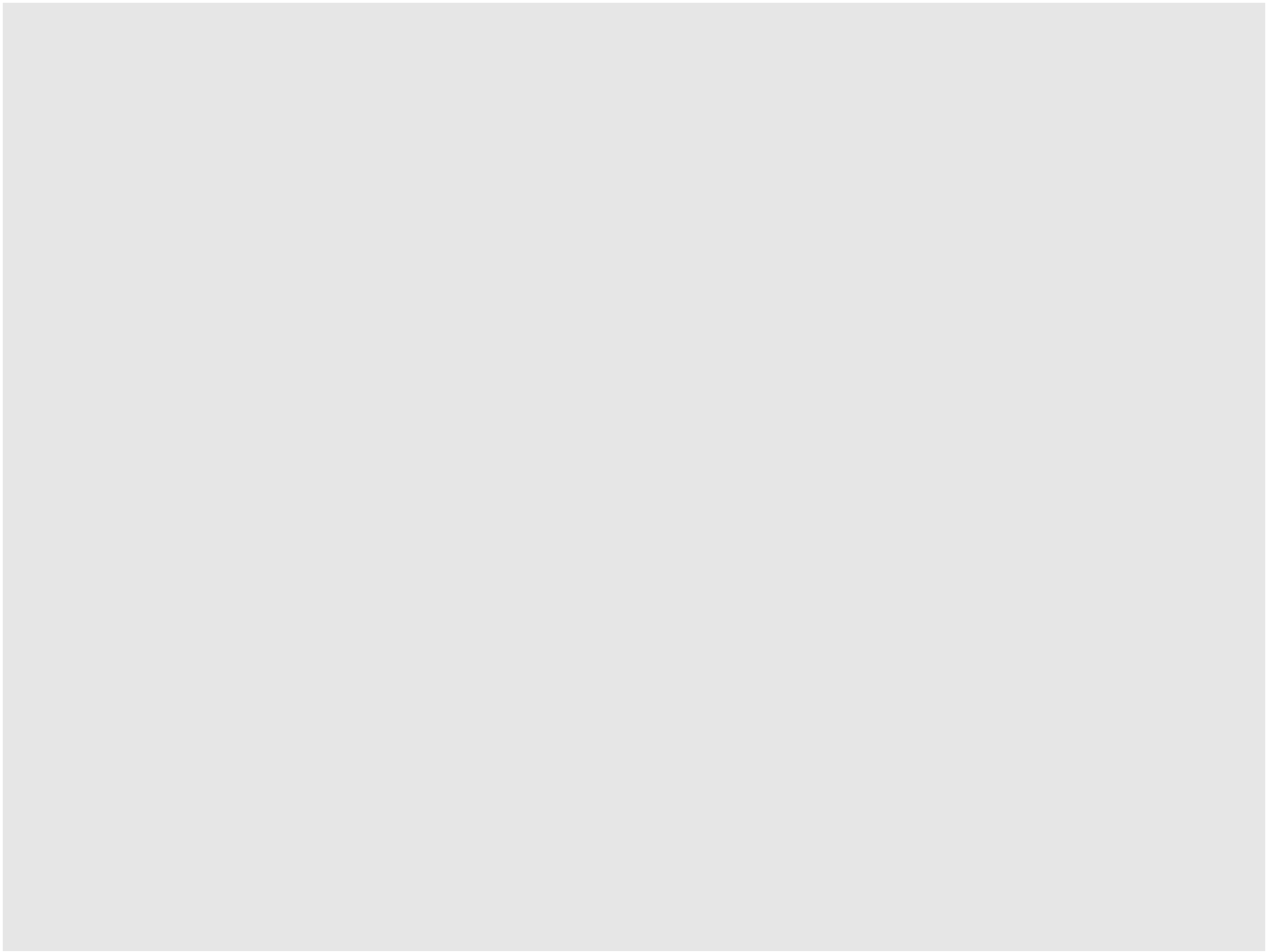


State Sen. Robert Clements

District: 2

From: Elmwood

Party: Republican



State Sen. Robert Hilkemann

District: 4

From: Omaha

Party: Republican



State Sen. Mike McDonnell

District: 5

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic

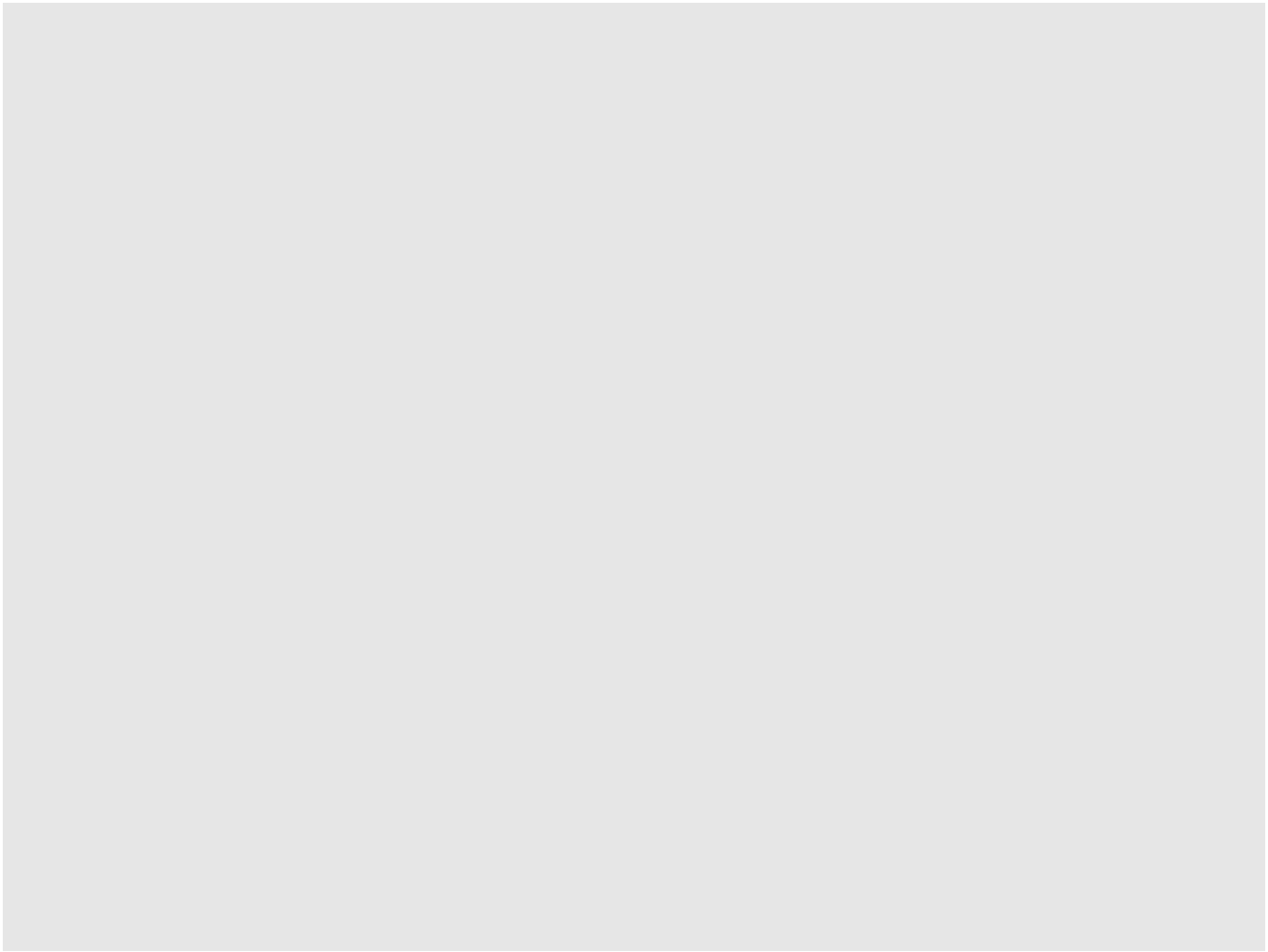


State Sen. Machaela Cavanaugh

District: 6

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic



State Sen. Megan Hunt

District: 8

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic

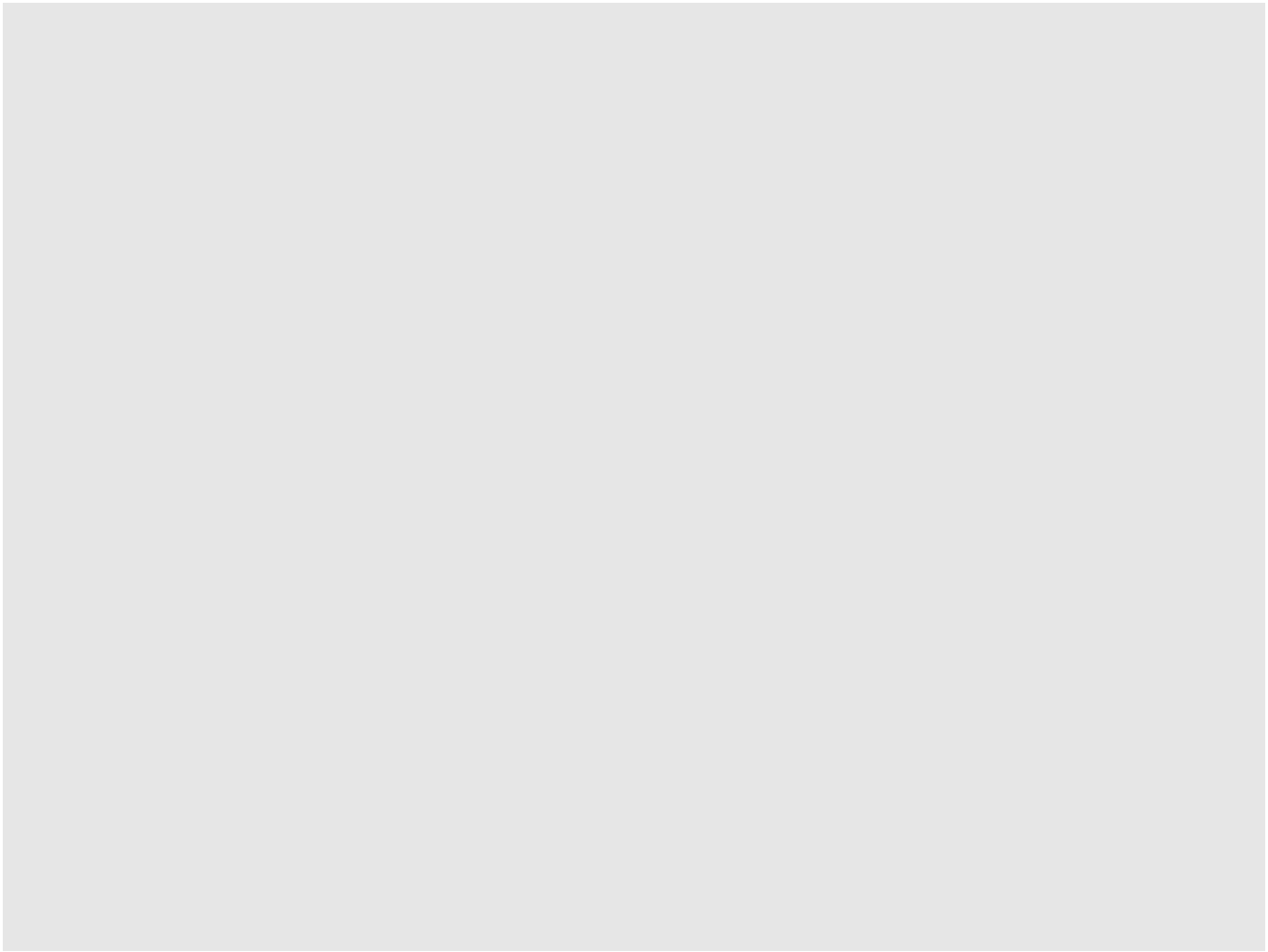


State Sen. John Cavanaugh

District: 9

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic



State Sen. Wendy DeBoer

District: 10

From: Bennington

Party: Democratic

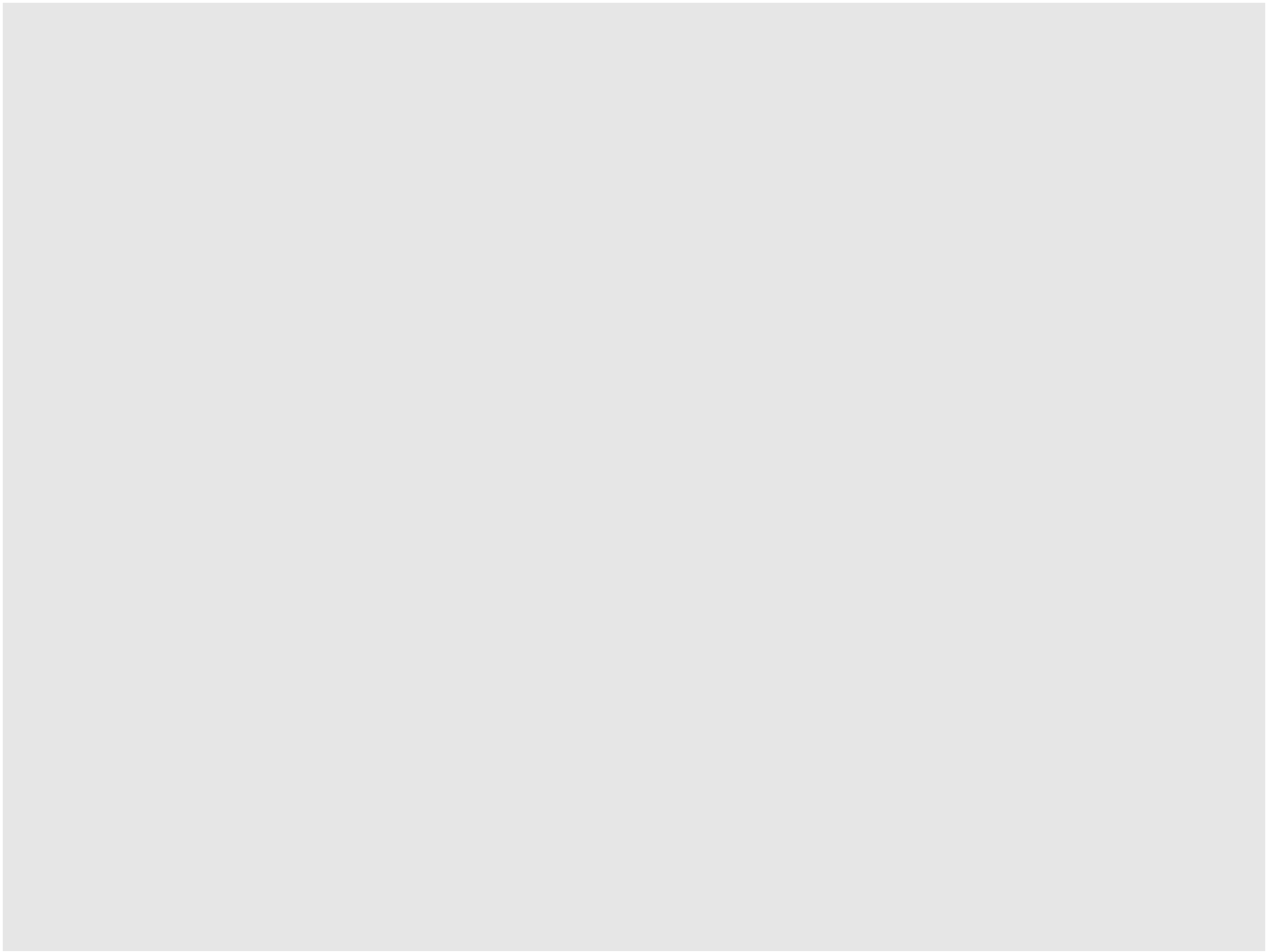


State Sen. Terrell McKinney

District: 11

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic



State Sen. Steve Lathrop

District: 12

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic

Handout

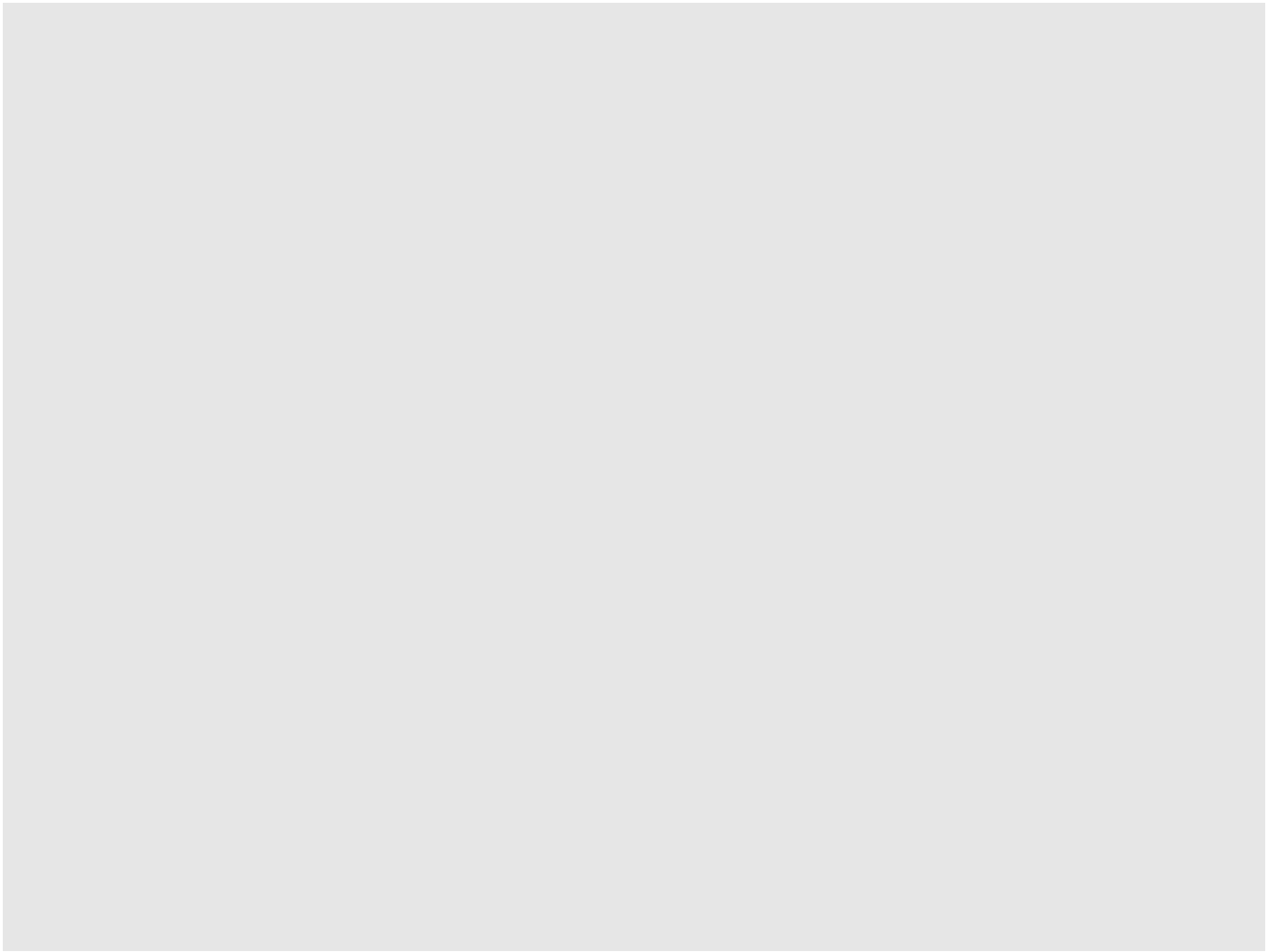


State Sen. Justin Wayne

District: 13

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic



State Sen. John Arch

District: 14

From: La Vista

Party: Republican



State Sen. Lynne Walz

District: 15

From: Fremont

Party: Democratic



State Sen. Ben Hansen

District: 16

From: Blair

Party: Republican



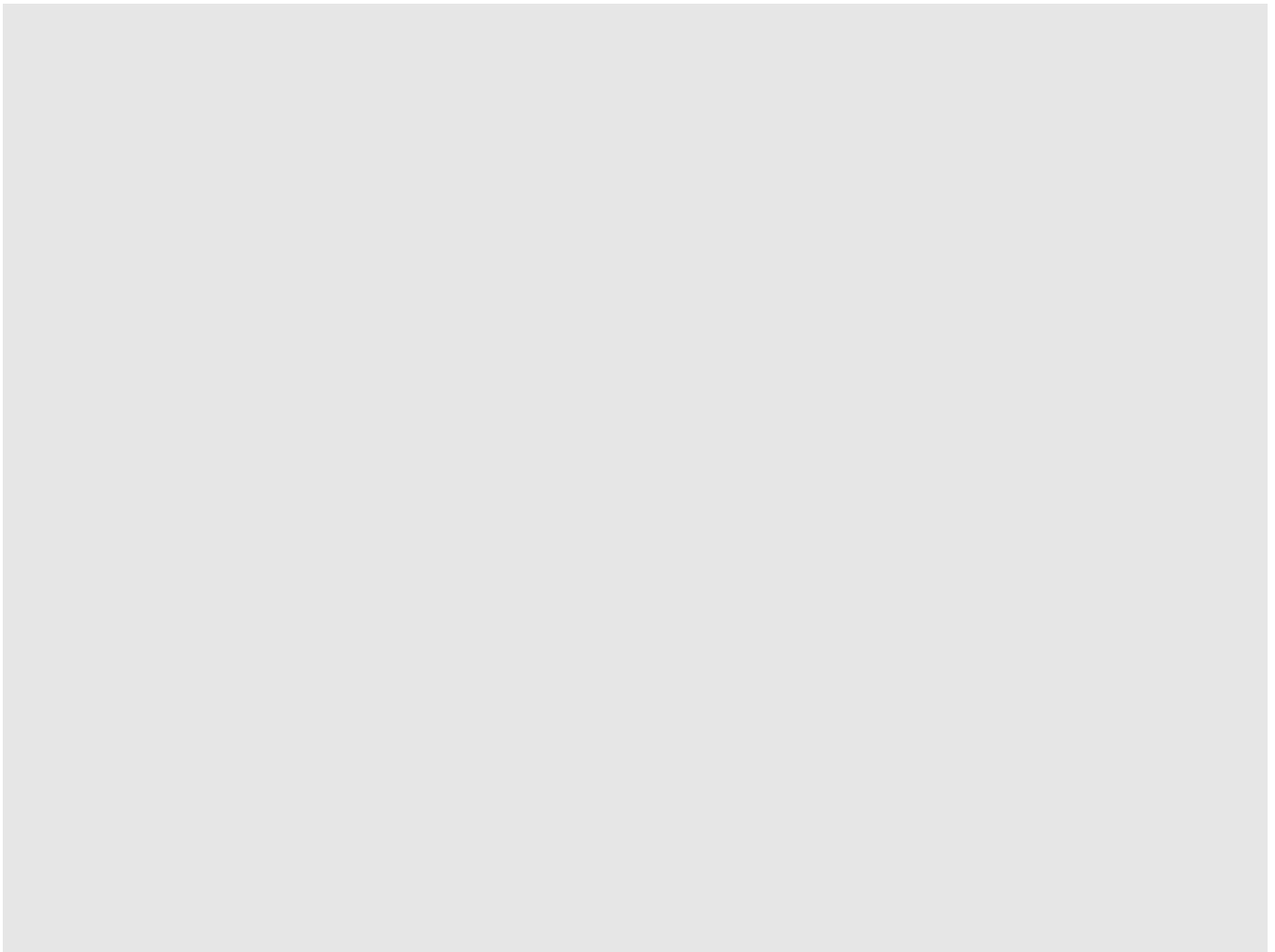
State Sen. Joni Albrecht

District: 17

From: Thurston

Party: Republican

Handout

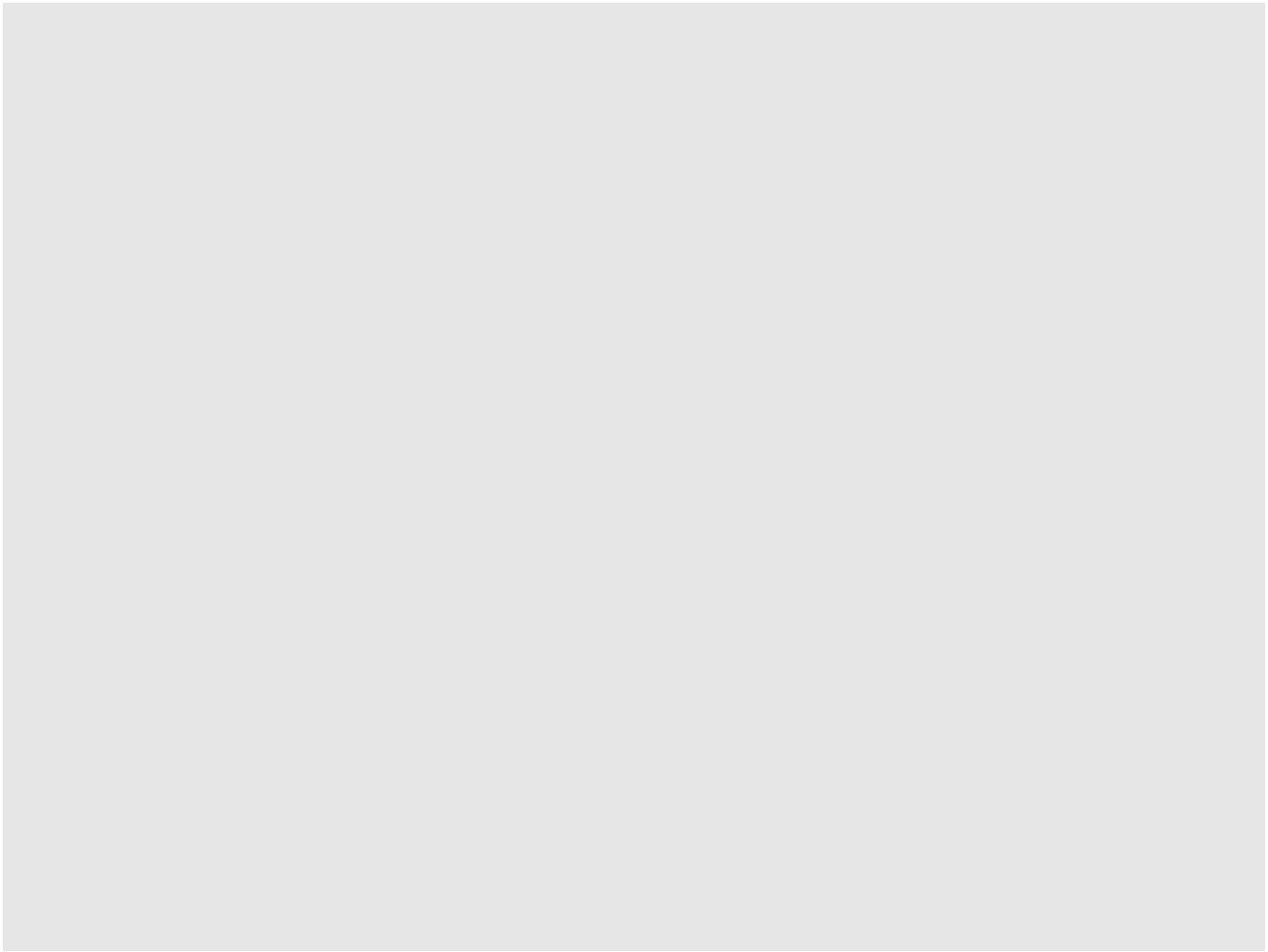


State Sen. Brett Lindstrom

District: 18

From: Omaha

Party: Republican



State Sen. Mike Flood

District: 19

From: Norfolk

Party: Republican

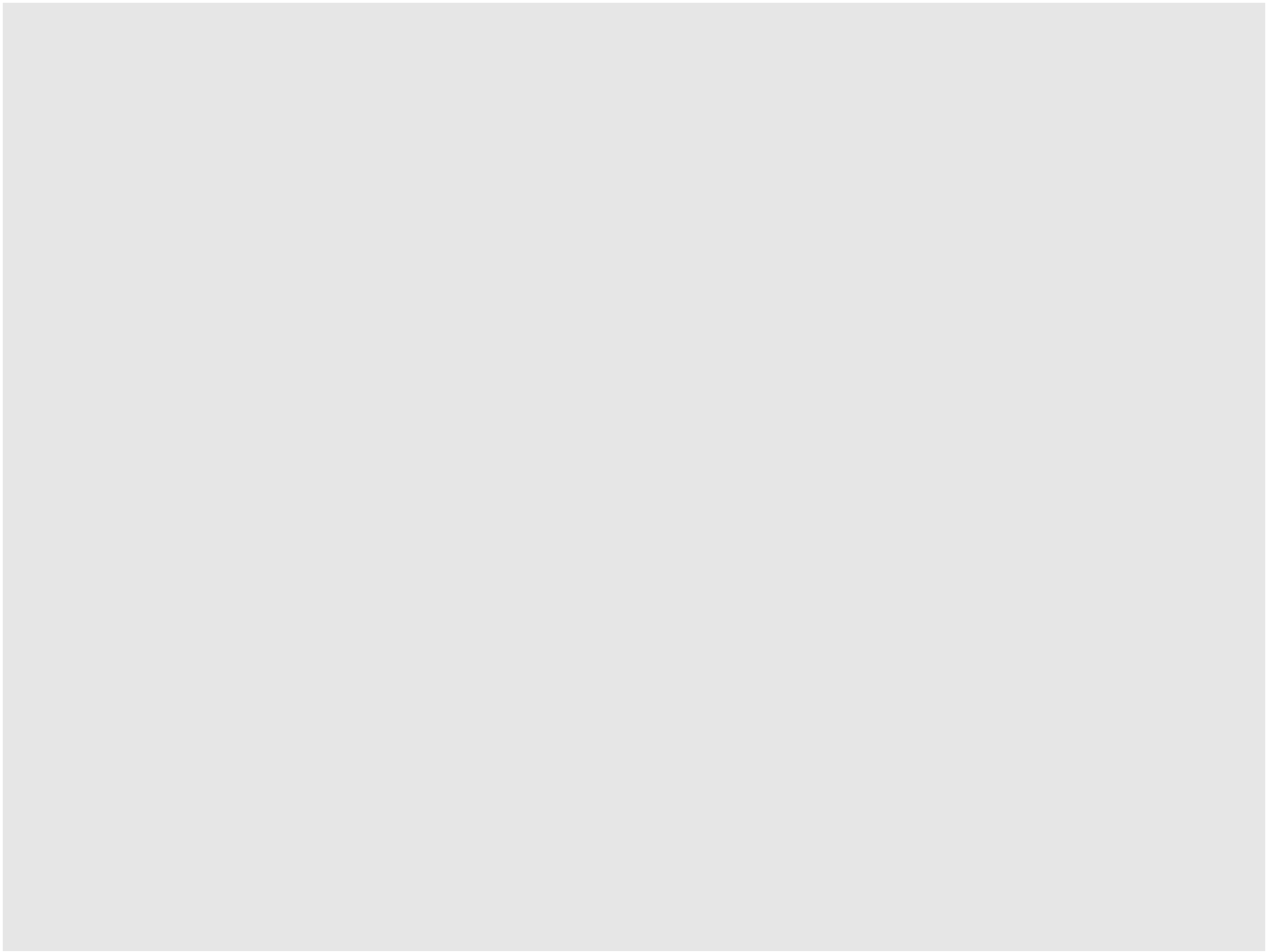


State Sen. John McCollister

District: 20

From: Omaha

Party: Republican

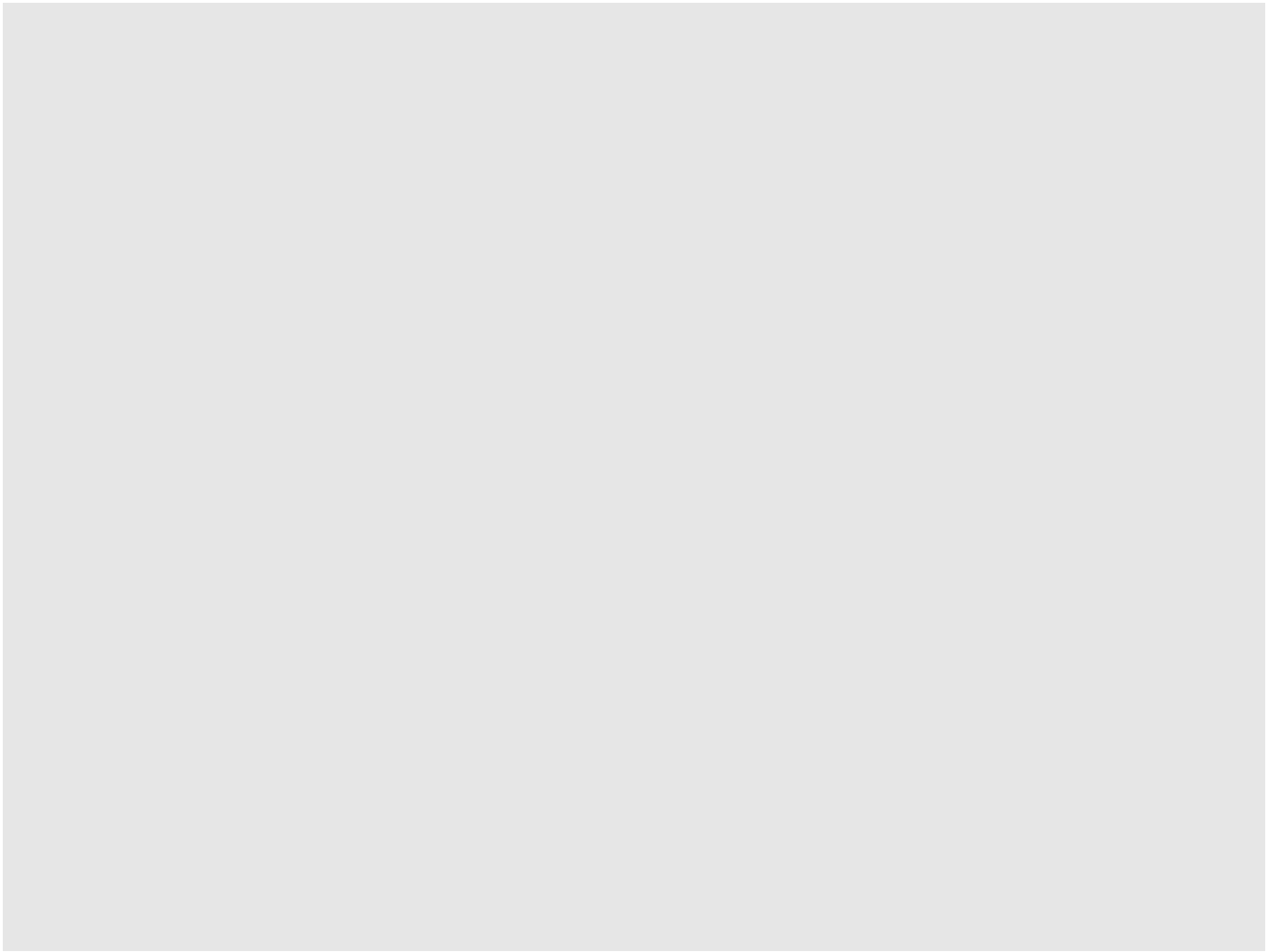


State Sen. Mike Hilgers

District: 21

From: Lincoln

Party: Republican



State Sen. Mike Moser

District: 22

From: Columbus

Party: Republican



State Sen. Bruce Bostelman

District: 23

From: Brainard

Party: Republican



State Sen. Mark Kolterman

District: 24

From: Seward

Party: Republican

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State Sen. Suzanne Geist

District: 25

From: Lincoln

Party: Republican

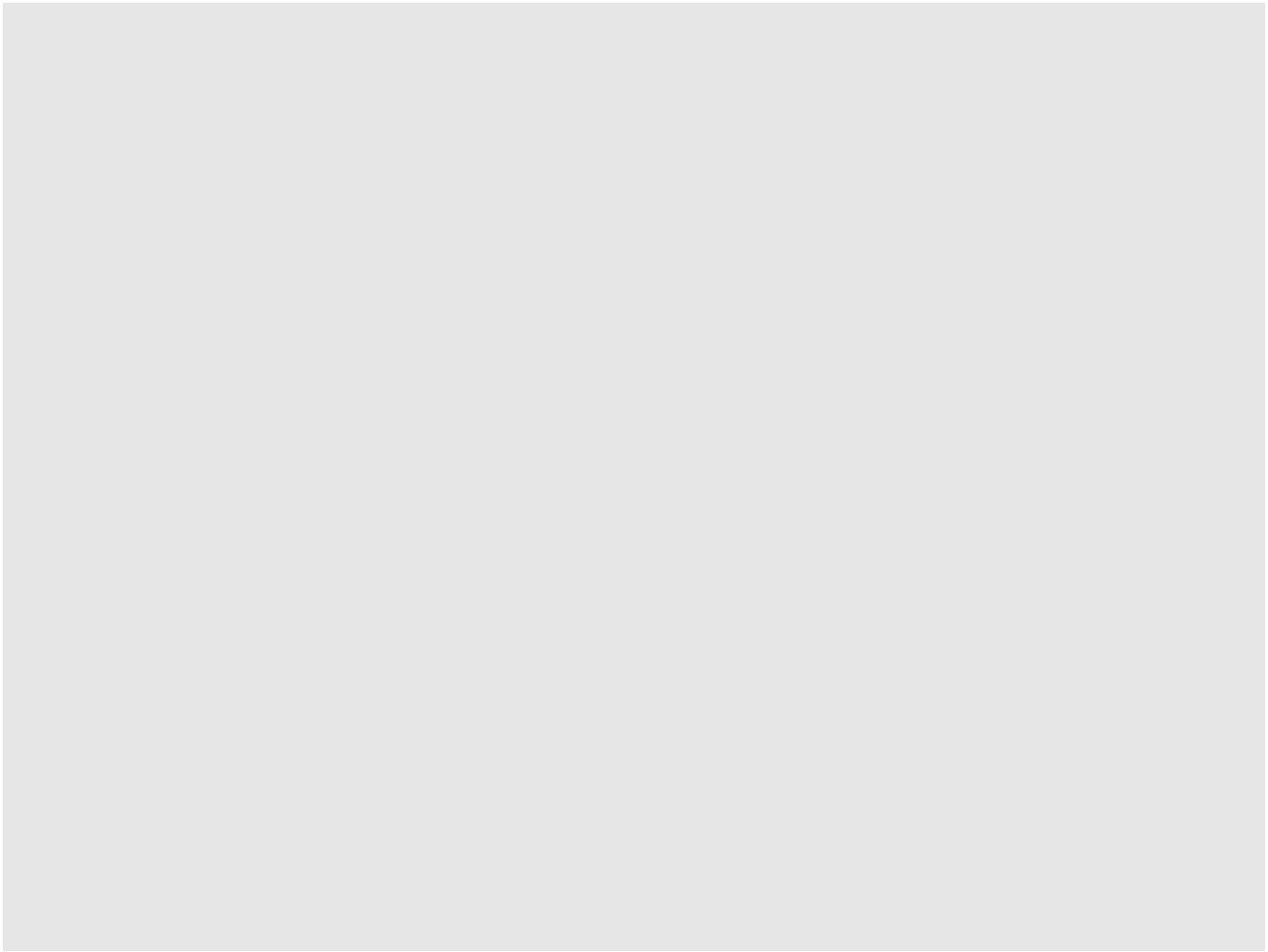


State Sen. Matt Hansen

District: 26

From: Lincoln

Party: Democratic



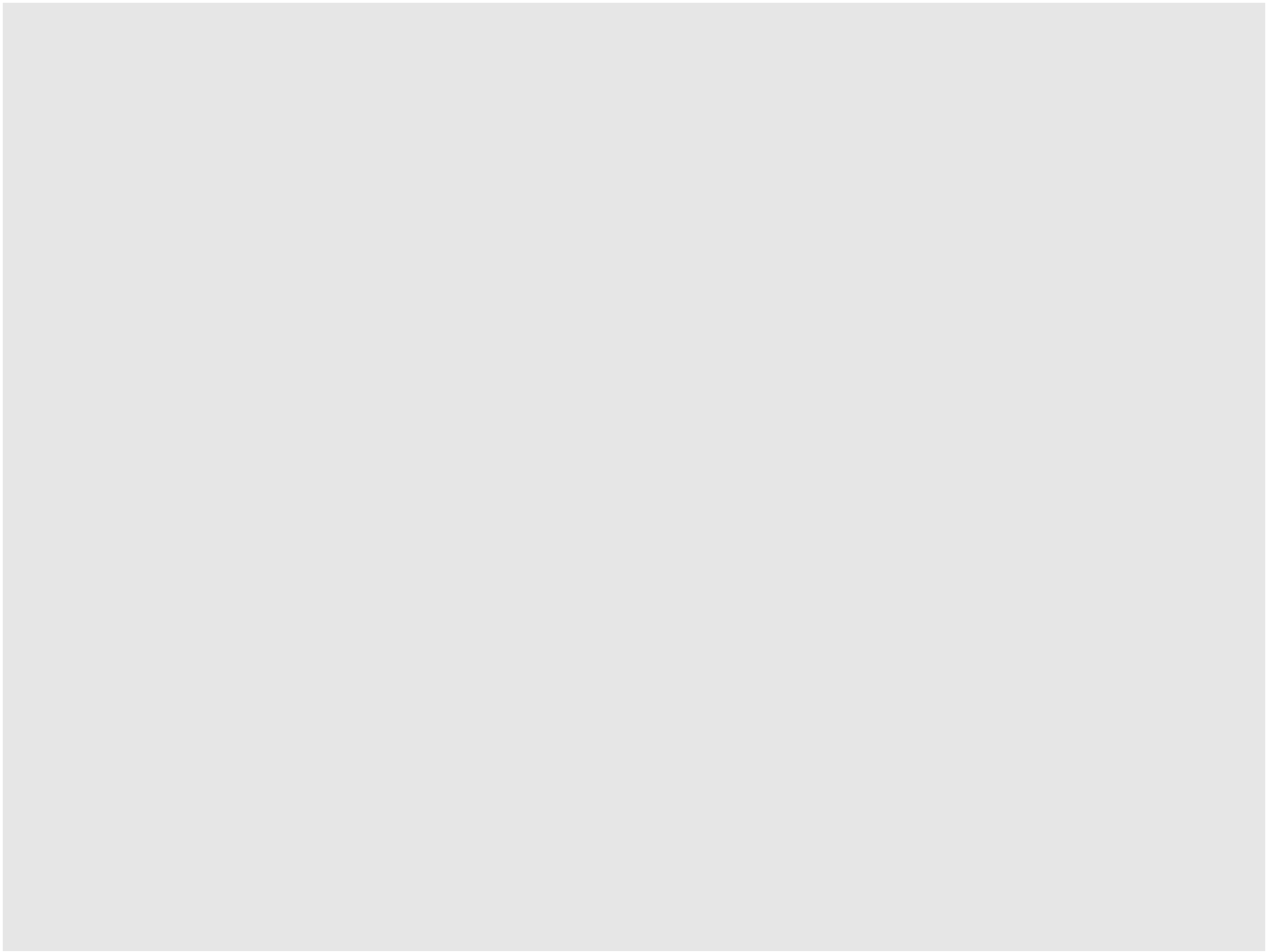
State Sen. Patty Pansing Brooks

District: 28

From: Lincoln

Party: Democratic

Handout

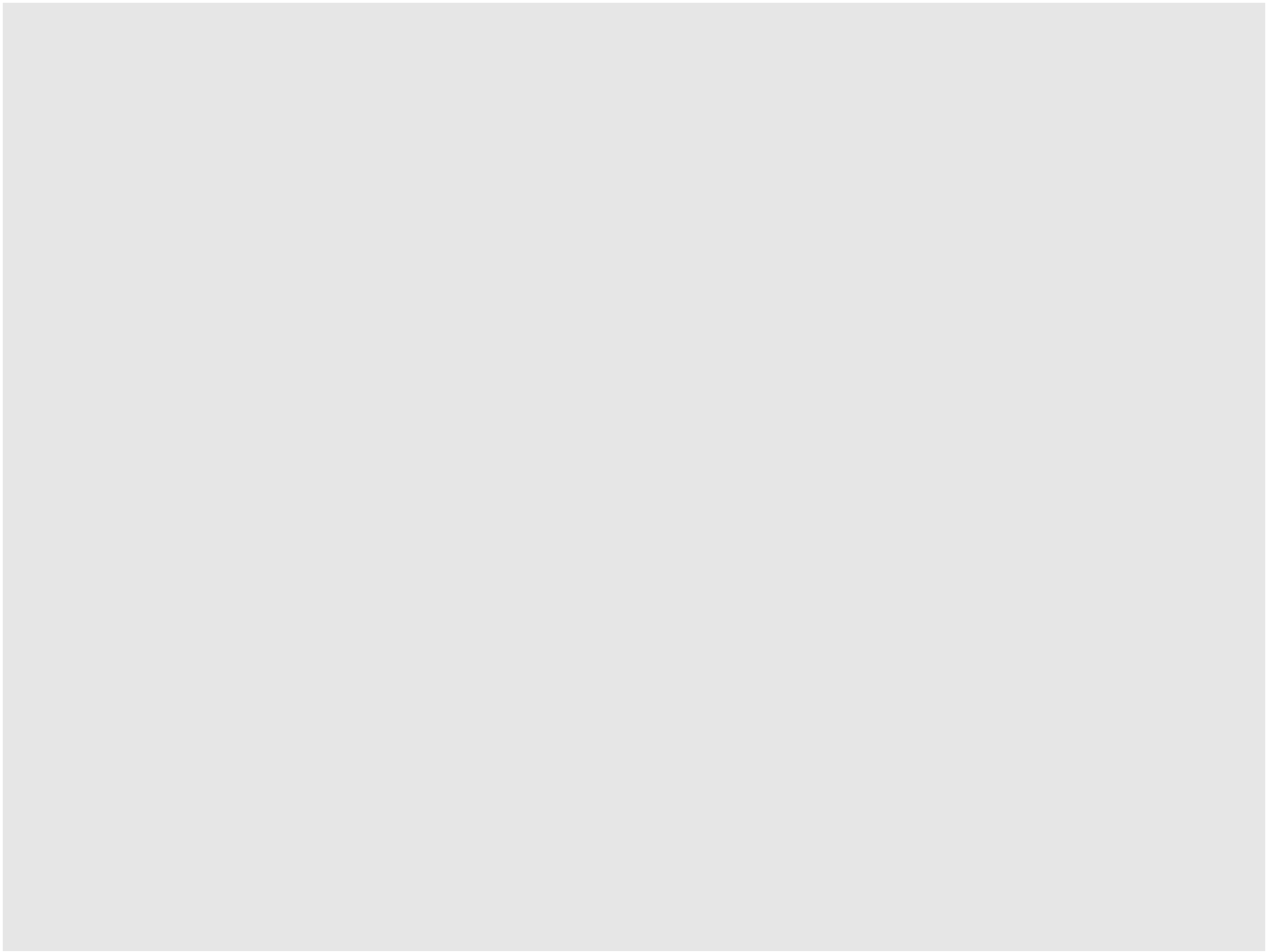


State Sen. Eliot Bostar

District: 29

From: Lincoln

Party: Democratic



State Sen. Myron Dorn

District: 30

From: Adams

Party: Republican

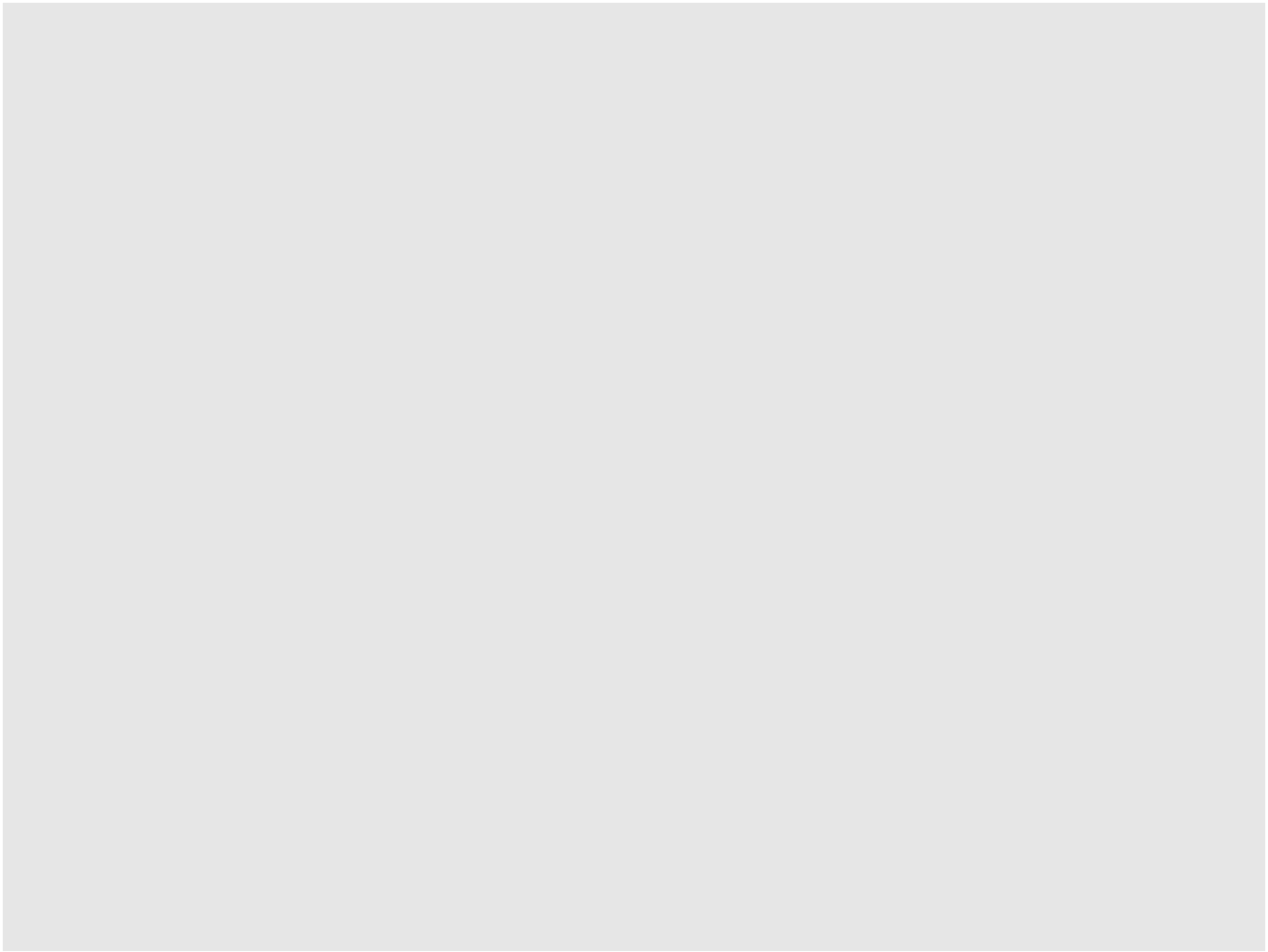


State Sen. Rich Pahls

District: 31

From: Omaha

Party: Republican



State Sen. Tom Brandt

District: 32

From: Plymouth

Party: Republican



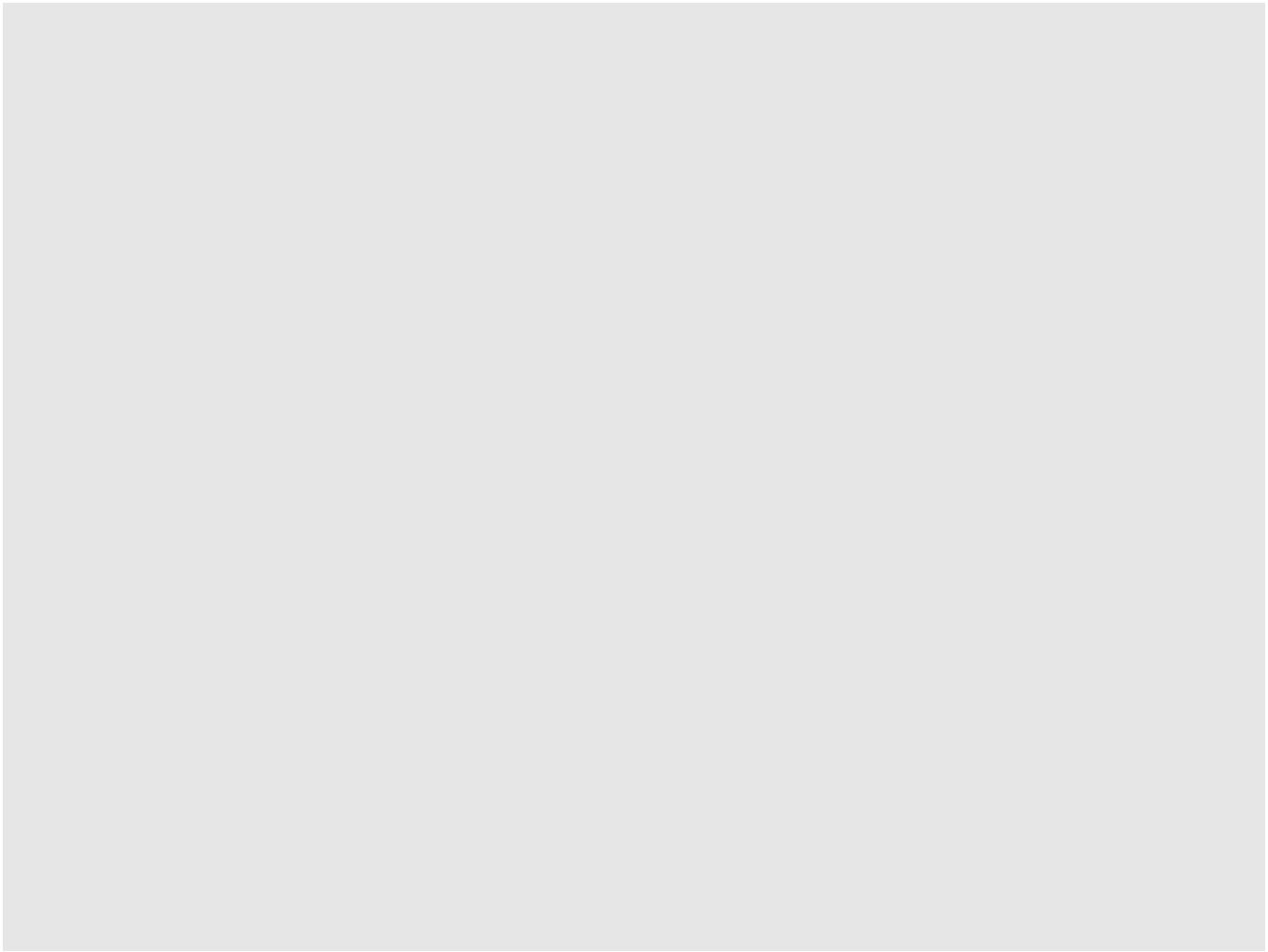
State Sen. Steve Halloran

District: 33

From: Hastings

Party: Republican

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State Sen. Curt Friesen

District: 34

From: Henderson

Party: Republican



State Sen. Raymond Aguilar

District: 35

From: Grand Island

Party: Republican



State Sen. Matt Williams

District: 36

From: Gothenburg

Party: Republican

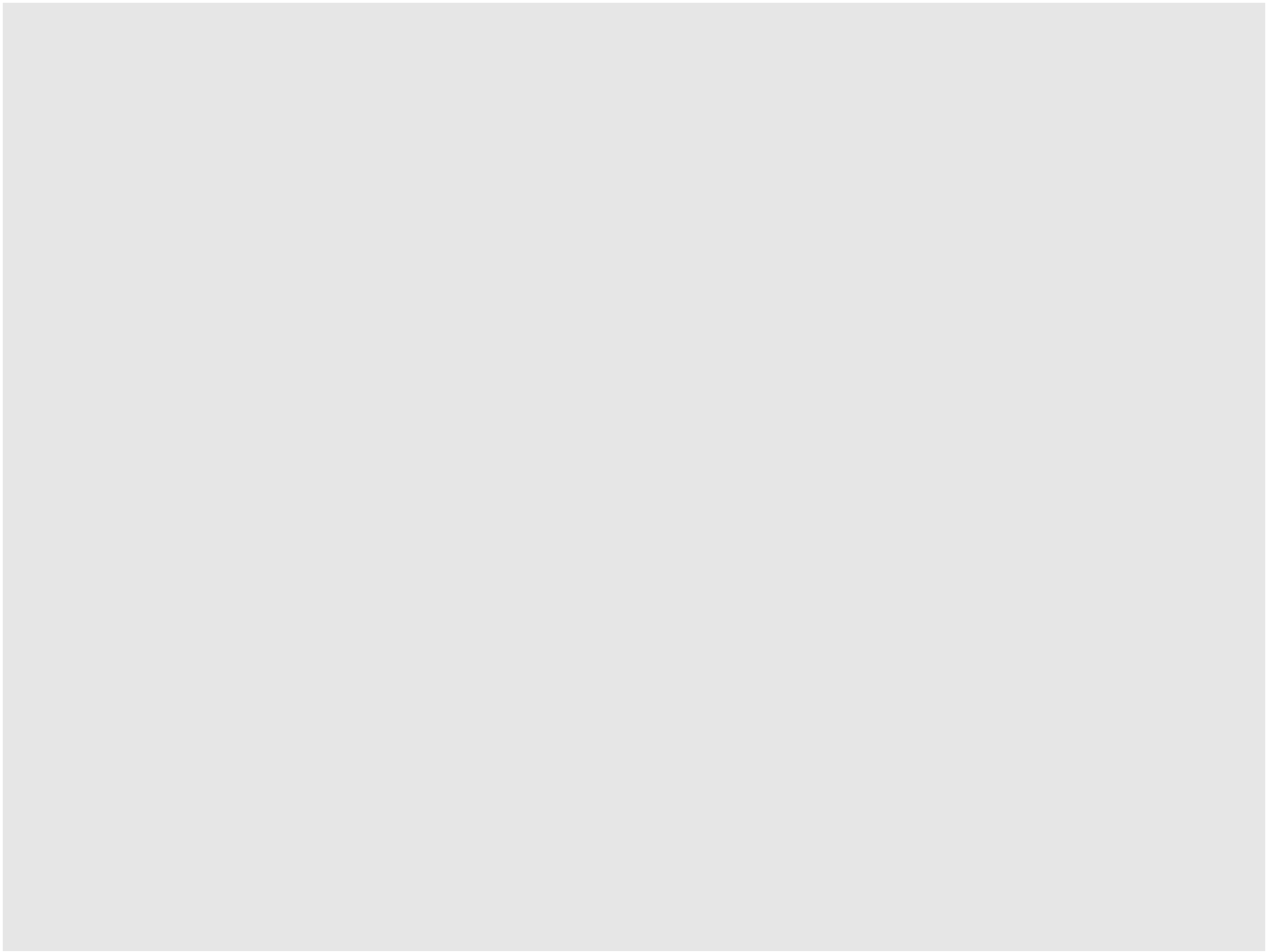


State Sen. John Lowe

District: 37

From: Kearney

Party: Republican

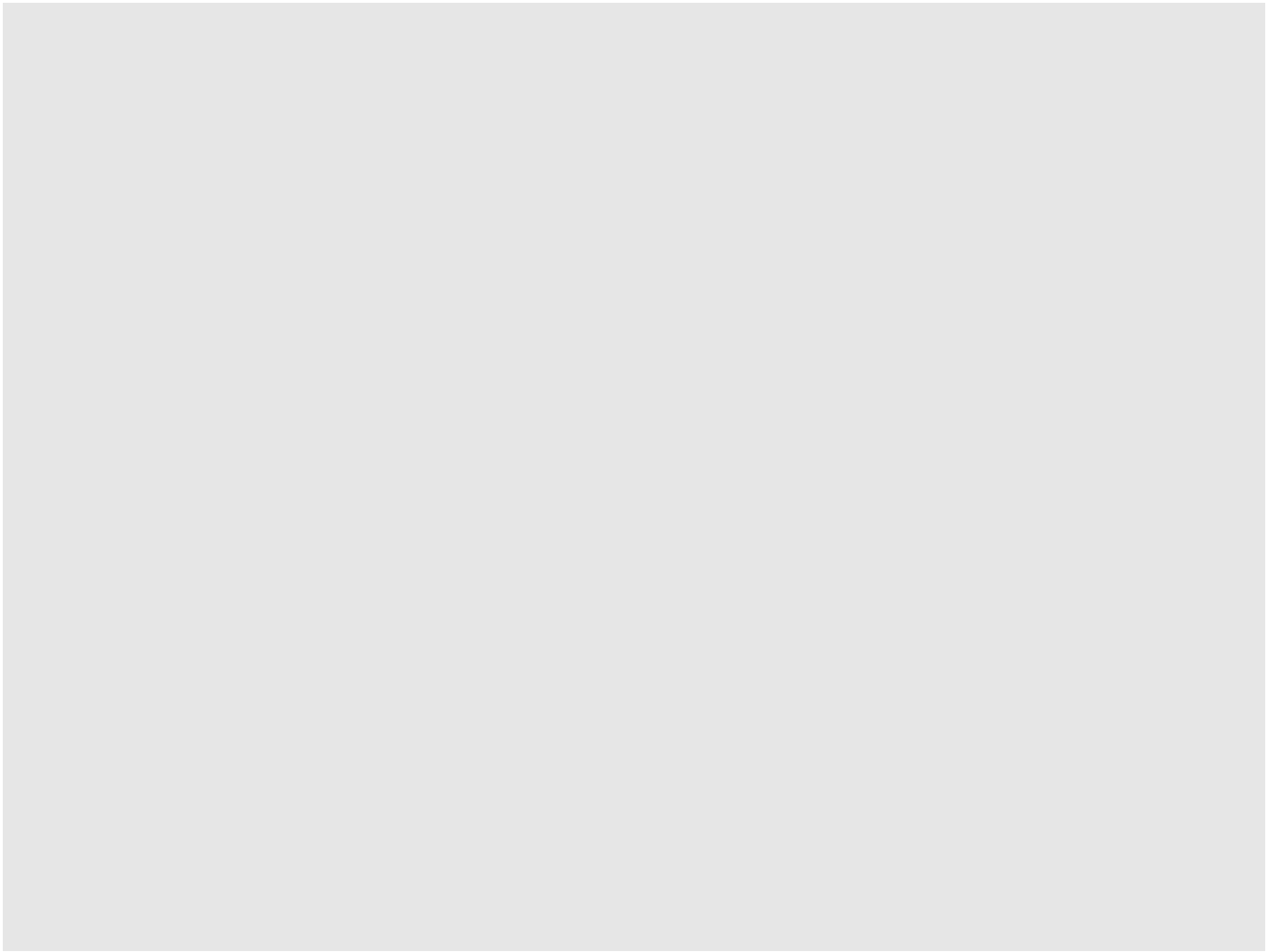


State Sen. Dave Murman

District: 38

From: Glenvil

Party: Republican

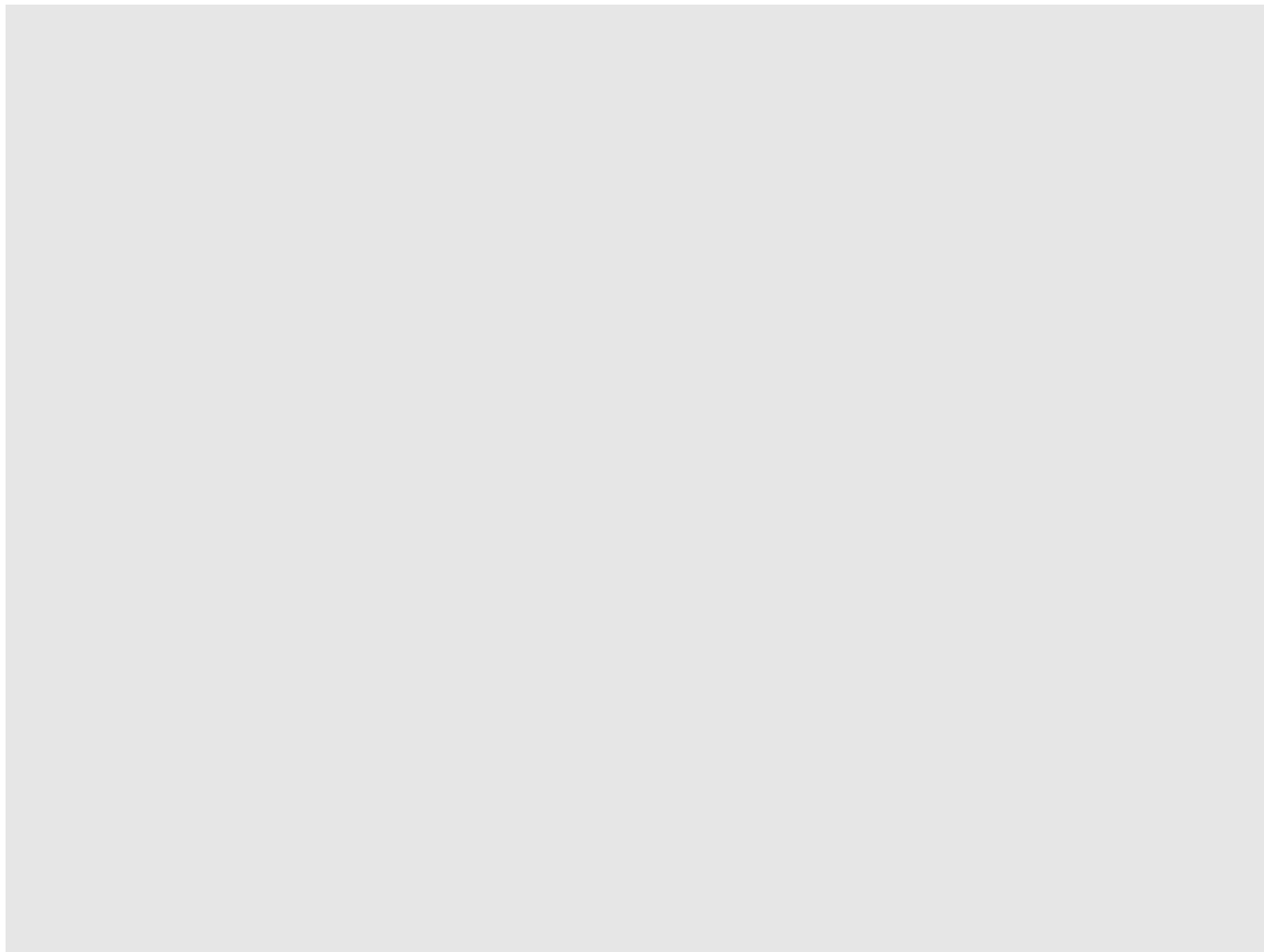


State Sen. Tim Gragert

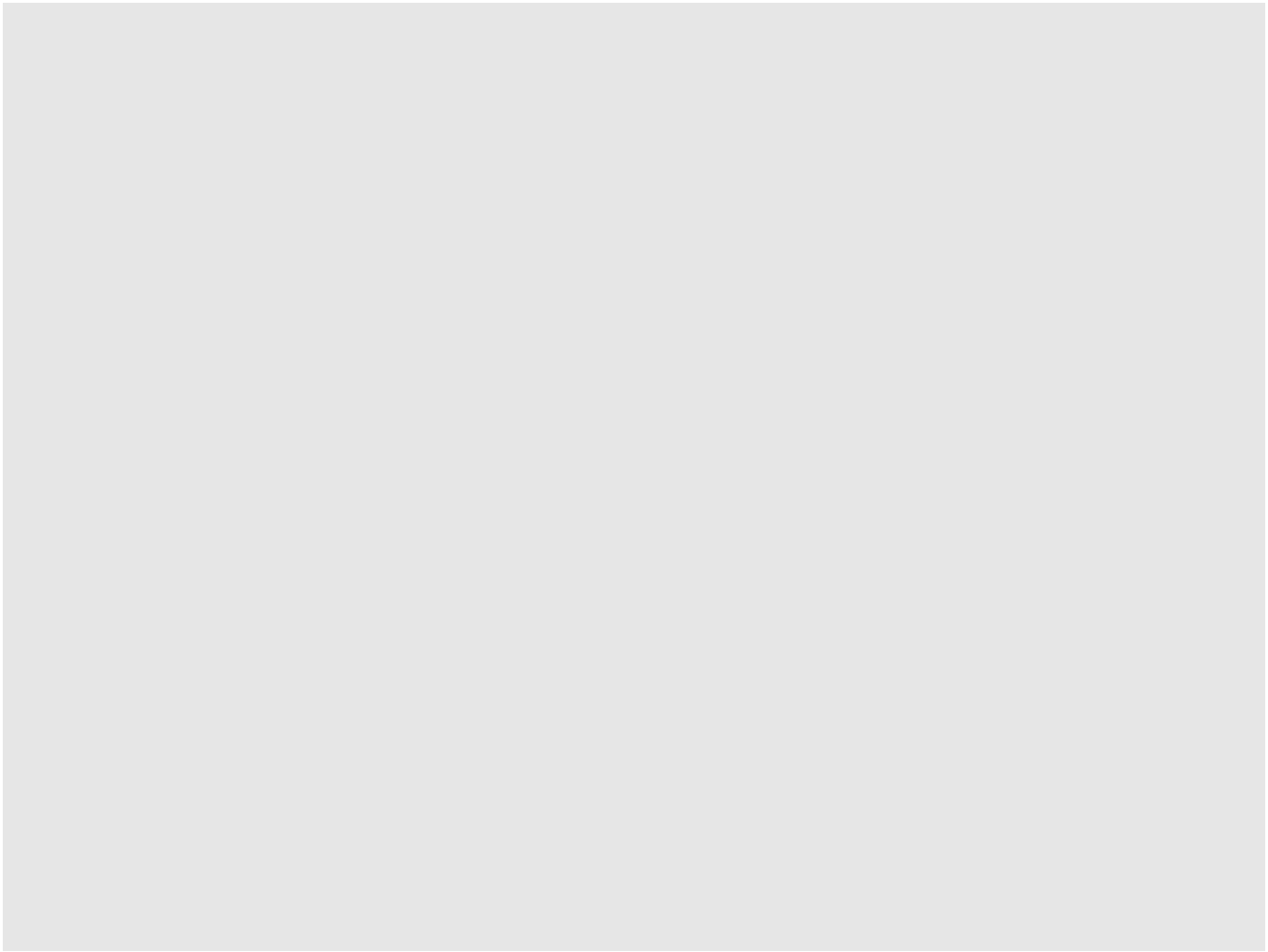
District: 40

From: Creighton

Party: Republican



Tom Briese

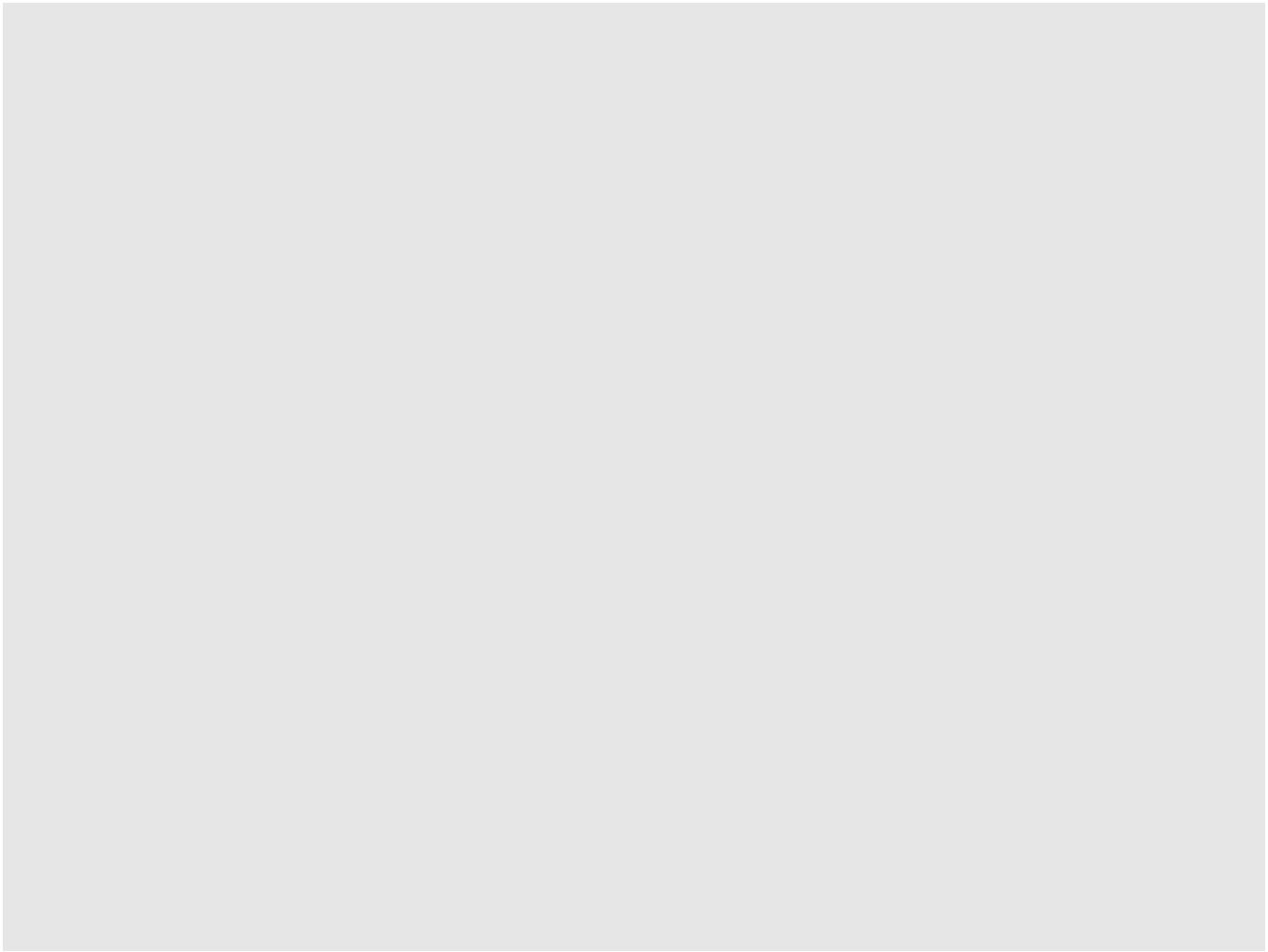


State Sen. Mike Groene

District: 42

From: North Platte

Party: Republican



State Sen. Tom Brewer

District: 43

From: Gordon

Party: Republican

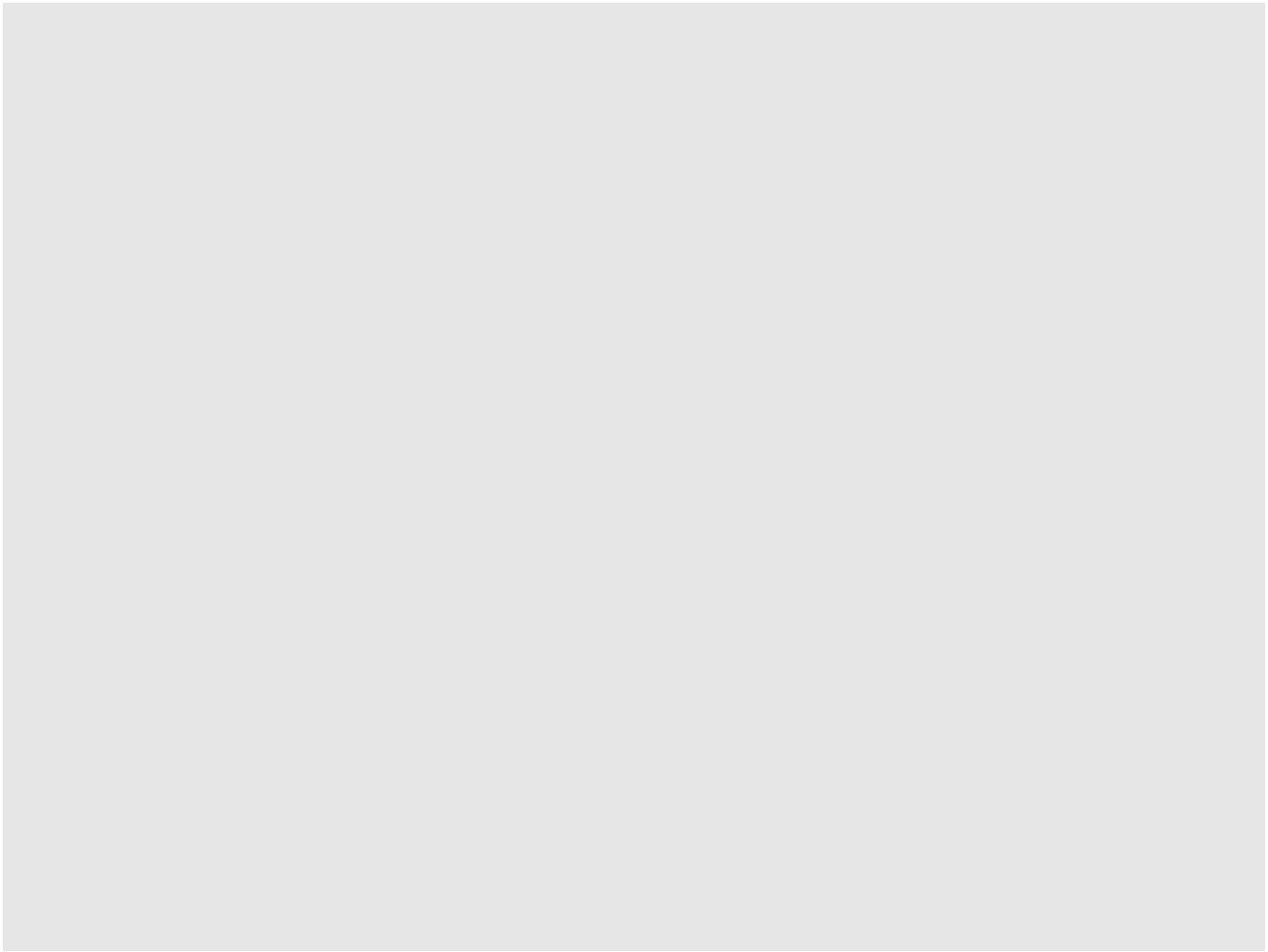


State Sen. Dan Hughes

District: 44

From: Venango

Party: Republican



State Sen. Rita Sanders

District: 45

From: Bellevue

Party: Republican



State Sen. Adam Morfeld

District: 46

From: Lincoln

Party: Democratic

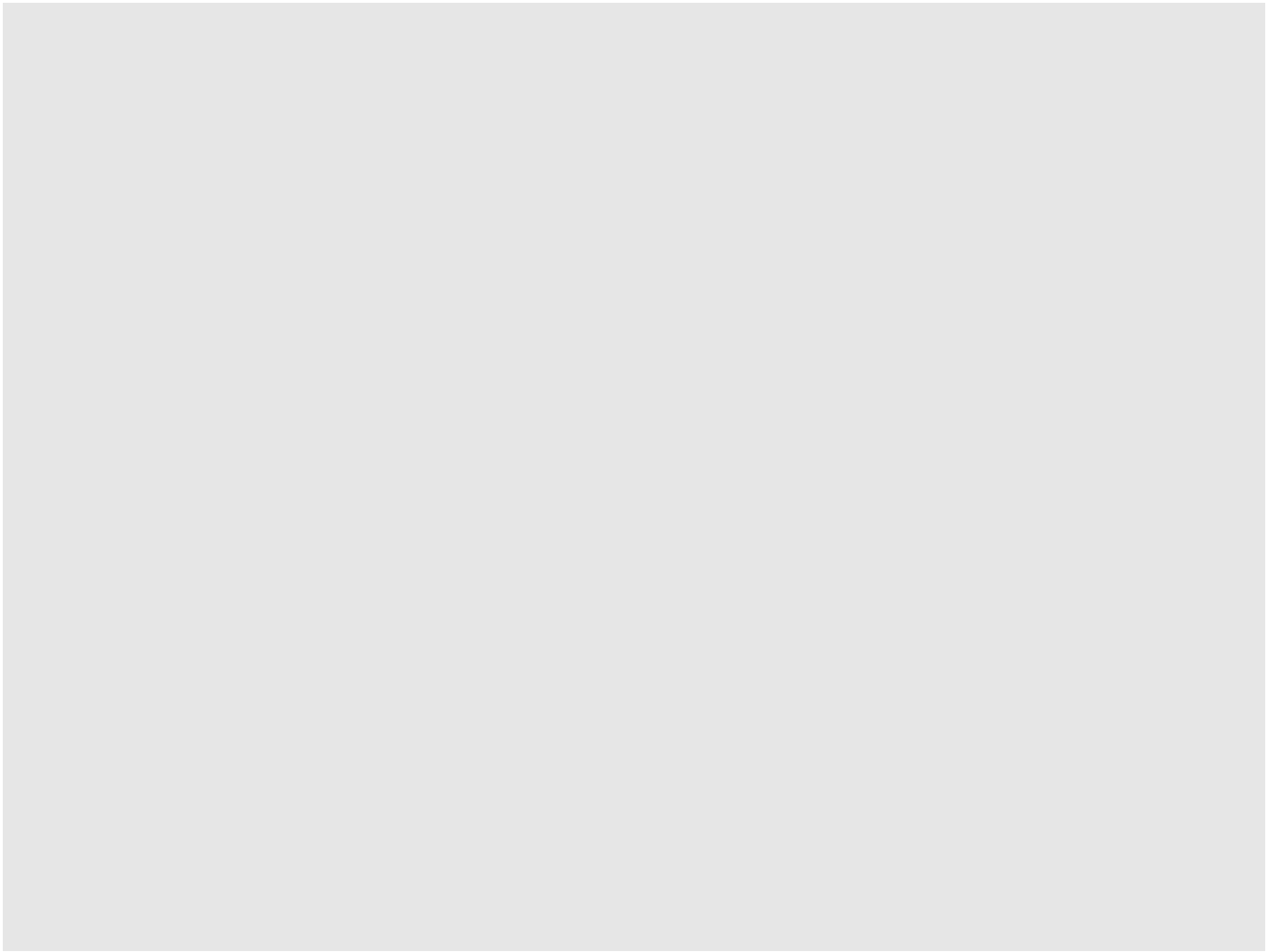


State Sen. Steve Erdman

District: 47

From: Bayard

Party: Republican



State Sen. John Stinner

District: 48

From: Gering

Party: Republican



State Sen. Jen Day

District: 49

From: Omaha

Party: Democratic

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