SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right. Let's get our meeting started. This is February the 14th. Happy Valentine's Day to everyone. Senate Governmental Affairs Committee called the order. Madam Secretary, if you would please call the roll.

SECRETARY: Senator Hewitt?

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: Present.

SECRETARY: Present. Senator Allain? Senator Milligan?

SENATOR BARRY MILLIGAN: Present.

SECRETARY: Present. Senator Foil?

SENATOR FRANKLIN FOIL: Present.

SECRETARY: Present. Senator Tarver? Senator Womack?

SENATOR GLEN WOMACK: Present.

SECRETARY: Present. Senator Reese?

SENATOR MIKE REESE: Here.

SECRETARY: Present. Senator Harris and Senator Price? That is five in a quorum.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right. Thank you very much. All right. For those who are here for Senate Bill 23 by Senator Luneau which is a Supreme Court Redistricting Bill, I'd like for you to know that he has asked that we push that to tomorrow and so that bill will not be heard today. Next, we have HB2 by

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Chairman Stefanski reapportioning the Public Service Commission. Oh, you know what? Excuse me one second before you start. Have a seat. I need to go through the minutes real quick. We have minutes in your packet members on February the 8th. Give you a chance to look at those, any corrections or changes to those minutes? Senator Milligan moves that we adopt the minutes from February 8, any opposed? All right, so those minutes will be adopted. We also have minutes on February 9. Senator Womack moves that we adopt those minutes. Any discussion or opposition? All right, seeing none, those minutes stand adopted as well. All right. Thank you very much. Chairman Stefanski, so you have a PSC Bill, HB2?

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN STEFANSKI: Yeah. Yes, thank you, Madam chairwoman and members of the committee. This was my attempt to bring the PSC into compliance and I'll tell you from a motivation standpoint, as we traveled the roadshow and as we worked on redistricting over this past year, one thing I continued to hear that was a consistent theme was that the PSC to a lot of members made the most sense, just from a geographic perspective. And so, with that in the back of my head, I said, "Let me just start with what we currently have. Let me make sure that

we're maintaining our majority-minority seat and then let's get the population in line." And that's essentially what I did. I took our current framework, assured that our majority-minority district would continue to be able to allow that community to elect a candidate of choice and then move on and just got the geography right. And so happy to answer any questions about that, happy to talk, but that was the motivation and that's in essence what it does.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right. Good. Thank you. Senator Reese?

SENATOR MIKE REESE: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. Chairman Stefanski, first of all, before we talk about PSC even, hats off to the work and the effort that you put into the entire redistricting process. You and Chairman Hewitt both have taken on a huge burden and a huge task and I've witnessed over the last several months as you've attempted to engage every member, every constituency seek input from everybody involved in all of the map. So, hats off to all the tremendous effort and work that you put into really fair and transparent process. So, as it relates to PSC and you and I visited about this, we both have a couple of versions of a Public Service Commission map that are remarkably similar. So, I was

just curious if you might be willing that we perhaps defer this in committee today and give and I an opportunity later on today to look at those two map versions and see if we kind -- to work between both of them to achieve a similar goal and just curious your thoughts on.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN STEFANSKI: Yeah, no, look, I think that's a good idea. I mean obviously there's a version that's passed the Senate with I think unanimous support. There's a version that's passed the House with unanimous support. So I think both of us are on the right direction and maybe to save the body, time and workload, you and I today -- I think that would be a good idea. We sit down. We see if we can maybe merge the two thoughts from the Senate perspective and the House perspective and come up with something that works for the whole state that we can all get behind. So, I think that's a good idea. Madam Chairwoman, obviously, I can't object. But I would have no personal objection to doing that. And maybe if you have availability on tomorrow's agenda scheduling for tomorrow to where I could come back, I think that's a good idea.

SENATOR MIKE REESE: Madam Chairwoman, would that be a possibility to schedule it for tomorrow if we defer today?

[00:05:03]

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: We can certainly do that. I think we will have a couple of other bills that still want to be heard tomorrow. And so Chairman, I'd be happy to do that if that's agreeable to Senator Reese and the rest of the committee.

SENATOR MIKE REESE: I think with Chairman Stefanski's agreement to do so, I'll be glad to make a motion to defer today.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right. So, Senator Reese has moved that we defer House Bill 2, and with the commitment to hearing it tomorrow, any objection to doing that? All right. I don't see any objection. So, we will do that chairman, and we'll see you back tomorrow.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHN STEFANSKI: Perfect. See you all you tomorrow. And again, I want to compliment your committee as well, the same way I do mine as this is tough. We have to make some very difficult decisions dealing with redistricting. So, I commend you all as well and know that the Senate is working just as hard as the House to do the right thing for

our state. So, thank you all for that and I'll see you all tomorrow.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: See you tomorrow. Thank you. All right. Our next bill is House Bill 3 by Representative Thomas. This is a BECE bill.

REPRESENTATIVE POLLY THOMAS: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for hearing this.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: You're welcome.

REPRESENTATIVE POLLY THOMAS: Give me a chance to get a little set up here. I echo Chairman Stefanski's congratulations for all the hard work that your committee is doing because I know what our committee is doing as well. Okay. Okay, in the BECE plan that I was asked to bring this bill, what my goal was, was to honor traditional lines to the extent practicable and allow for continuity of representation. I work to equalize the population based on geography and communities of interest, and I work to create districts so that citizens are able to elect candidate of their choice. In the malapportionment of the eight BEC Districts, there were several that were malapportioned with the plan that was adopted by the House, passed by the House. The malapportionment now are in District 1, 0.36%. In District 2, -2.6%. In District 3, 2.909%. In District 4, -1.558%. In

District 5, 3.021%. In District 6, 2.621%. In District 7, 1.194% and in District 8, 0.196%. One thing that was important to us to consider also in the plan evaluation was how many split parishes there were. This was important because of the way that schools are organized. As you well imagined, BECE is over schools of our 61 of 64 parishes. Those are organized by parish. So, it was important to have as a goal to have as few split parishes as possible with an amendment that has passed and did pass the House. We only have 11 split parishes, which I thought was a pretty important goal. We have no split precincts, which of course was one of our principles that guided us. I believe that this map complies with the law and I welcome your questions.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right, super. Well, thank you. All right, Senator Foil?

SENATOR FRANKLIN FOIL: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Representative Thomas, for your work. You know, I've been talking about your bill and the bill I'm working on with the president throughout the process. And as we discussed yesterday, I am going to offer some amendments today that have been requests -- The amendments basically put the bill in the posture of the bill that passed out of the Senate and

the amendments were requested by Madam Chair and some of the Northshore delegation to put the Northshore back together. But once again, I'm going to offer these amendments, but we want to continue to work together between my bill and the president's bill and your bill. Probably ultimately, we'll get a conference committee.

[00:10:03]

So, Madam Chair, that's what these amendments do. This puts this BECE bill in the same posture of the president's bill that we passed out of the Senate on Thursday, keeps two majority-minority districts and basically make some changes between Districts 1 and 3.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: Okay. All right. So, members, you're getting Set 142, Amendment Set 142 and I assume Representative Thomas that you're probably seeing this for the first time. But conceptually, it sounds like Senator Foil, this is basically amending Senate Bill 14 into this bill, is that right?

SENATOR FRANKLIN FOIL: That's correct. I've been told by staff with these amendments, this bill will be the bill that we passed out of the Senate on Thursday, the BECE bill.

REPRESENTATIVE POLLY THOMAS: And Senator Foil and I had spoken yesterday and I was aware that this was coming.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: Okay. All right. Well, it sounds to me like the intentions are the same between Senator Foil and President Cortez who he's working with and Representative Thomas to look for ways to consider sort of the best of both bills and to identify a path forward. So, I commend both of you for doing that. It certainly makes it much easier for the committees when we have authors that are bringing different ideas and coming together with a game plan. So, I appreciate both of you and your commitment to doing that.

SENATOR FRANKLIN FOIL: Thank you.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: All right. So, members, we have Set 142 that Senator Foil has made a motion that we adopt. Is there any objection to doing so? All right, seeing no objection, that set of amendments is adopted. Senator Price?

SENATOR EDWARD PRICE: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Since we add this amendment, are we going to allow this bill, allow also deferred?

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: That would be my intent. Yes.

SENATOR EDWARD PRICE: Okay. Thank you.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: So, what we have done in this committee, and I suspect you all have done something similar in House and Governmental, is when there's a set of amendments like this, we want to give the members as well as the public an opportunity to absorb and digest these. Of course, they're not completely nuisance. It does apparently mirror the bill that we previously passed, but I would be happy for those to lie over if that's the will of the committee and take them up again tomorrow. Again, because it is very similar to the bill that we've already heard, if it's the will of the committee and you all would prefer to adopt them and move on, then I'm happy to do that too. So, I'll look for some guidance from the committee as to what you like to do. We will be here tomorrow. So, Senator Price, would you like to defer it and consider it tomorrow? Okay. All right, I would be fine with that. Are there any other -- any objections to doing that from committee members? Okay. So, Senator Price has moved that we defer this bill to tomorrow so that we can consider the amendments. Seeing no objections, the amendments are adopted. That's right, the amendments

are adopted and we'll defer the bill taking action on the bill until tomorrow.

REPRESENTATIVE POLLY THOMAS: Thank you.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: Also gives you all some opportunity for some continued dialog. Okay. All right.

REPRESENTATIVE POLLY THOMAS: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

SENATOR SHARON HEWITT: Thank you very much Representative Thomas. All right, is there any other business before this committee? All right, seeing none, I will tell you then that we'll meet again at 9:30 tomorrow and we'll have a few of these bills I suspect on our agenda again tomorrow. Motion by Senator Milligan to adjourn. Thank you.

[00:14:15]

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Anders Nelson
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May 1, 2022