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TO: All Media
FROM: Sandy Danek, Executive Director
DATE: June 1, 2023
RE: Nebraska Right to Life Political Action Committee Rescinds Endorsement of Senator Merv Riepe

When Senator Riepe was running for office in 2022, he sought and received Nebraska Right to Life's endorsement. Not only did he check the box on the NRL candidate survey for abortion being legal "in no case," he included handwritten comments on the survey stating: "Senator Joni Albrecht and Senator Suzanne Geist have agreed to serve as a reference to my character and integrity regarding right to life."

Yet Senator Albrecht, the author of LB626, the Heartbeat Act, was unaware of Riepe using her name in this way, and was equally stunned at the "present-not-voting" action that effectively killed the bill this legislative session.

"We were caught off guard by Senator Riepe's non-vote, given that he chose to co-sponsor LB626, serves on the Health and Human Services Committee and voted to advance the bill out of committee, and then voted to advance the bill on the first round of debate," Danek said.

The NRL Political Action Committee has a long history of educating voters by compiling candidate responses to a survey that are then published in NRL Voter Guides. Noted on the guides are candidates endorsed by NRL PAC. Endorsements are made on the basis of candidates' survey answers, coupled in some cases with follow-up interviews with NRL Board members. Senator Riepe was not interviewed given his record of voting in support two pro-life bills from previous legislative sessions. Approximately 75,000 printed guides are distributed statewide and are also made available via social media.

Several days before LB626 came to the floor for the first debate by the full Legislature (April 27), and without speaking to other pro-life senators about concerns he had with his own co-sponsored bill, Senator Riepe proposed an amendment to LB626 that would lengthen the time that abortions could be performed to 12 weeks instead of the bill's original ban once a heartbeat could be detected (approximately 6 weeks). He justified this move by saying he only wanted "a discussion," and at that time, publicly stated in

multiple settings that he would still support the Heartbeat Act even if his amendment did not pass. His “present, not voting” to end the filibuster that was mounted by opponents killed the bill that, if passed, would have saved approximately 1,700 future Nebraska citizens annually.

“Had Nebraska Right to Life known Senator Riepe would not live up to his promises made publicly and privately, he would not have received our endorsement. While Senator Riepe ultimately voted for passage of Amendment 1658, the 12-week protection, his action compromises the integrity of our long-standing and sought-after endorsement process that pro-lifers have relied upon for decades when making voting decisions. Now that he has aligned himself with the “reproductive freedom” ideology, he no longer qualifies for NRL’s political support; therefore, Nebraska Right to Life Political Action Committee formally rescinds its endorsement of Senator Merv Riepe,” said Danek.