

Ryan Wilkins
Omaha, Nebraska

February 1, 2026

The Honorable Robert Clements
Chairperson, Appropriations Committee
Nebraska State Legislature
Via Email: rclements@leg.ne.gov

Re: Request for Oversight Hearings Regarding \$2.5 Million No-Bid DED Contract

Dear Senator Clements:

Suppose, hypothetically, that Nebraska's State Auditor revealed Governor Jim Pillen stole \$2.5 million in general funds – depositing taxpayer dollars directly into his personal bank account.

We can all agree impeachment proceedings would commence immediately, right? Open-and-shut case.

Now suppose Pillen didn't keep the money for *himself*. Instead, he directed it to a woman with whom he had an ***undisclosed personal relationship***. And he accomplished this by awarding her a massive, illegal, no-bid "emergency" contract chock-full of red flags: Backdated submissions, nonsensical justifications, late and shoddy work product, and the utter absence of any evidence establishing the multimillion-dollar recipient performed any serious work on Nebraska's behalf.

Surely, these tweaks change nothing: The Governor's conduct is no less corrupt, and the case for impeachment no less clear, than had he stolen from Nebraska outright.

Because substantial evidence suggests this hypothetical may mirror reality, I respectfully urge you to formally investigate Governor Pillen's misconduct and, if warranted, impeach him.

Personal Relationship and Selection of GSD. First, let's state the obvious: Jim Pillen and Julie Bushell - the President, CEO, and ***only employee*** of Global Sustainability Developers, LLC ("GSD"), the recipient of a \$2.5 million-dollar contract from Nebraska's Department of Economic Development ("DED") - are close. They've taken four known trips together, both domestically and internationally, and they appeared together at the 2024 Aksarben Ball.

According to reporting by the *Nebraska Examiner*, when Bushell landed the no-bid contract, "top [DED] leaders ***did not know the firm*** they were contracting with[.]" GSD was "handpicked" by Pillen, a fact State Auditor Mike Foley flagged as extraordinary: "I've been in the [Capitol] building 25 years, 11 years as an auditor, and ***I can't recall anything that had the direct involvement of the governor.***"

Pillen says Bushell was "recommended by 'Aksarben.'" That's false: According to the Aksarben Foundation's president, "Aksarben ***has not made any recommendations to the governor or any of his staff*** regarding [GSD] and any [bioeconomy] contract with the State of Nebraska."

Contract Amount and Statutory Requirements. Nebraska law requires state contracts over \$50,000 to "be bid by a competitive formal bidding process[.]" GSD's contract was ***50 times*** this statutory threshold - the

highest-value no-bid contract since COVID-19. From the comfort of her home, Bushell collected from state coffers more than \$200,000 per month - or about **\$7,000 a day** - for “consulting” services. Oddly, for a contract of this magnitude, Bushell’s arrangement “did not require itemized receipts or time sheets” - just a monthly invoice, per the *Nebraska Examiner*.

Emergency Procurement Designation. Pillen’s push was only possible if GSD’s work were designated an “emergency.” Initially, no one even bothered to make this case: The one-page, five-question form accompanying the DED’s \$2.5 million purchase order was left completely blank. This, too, violated Nebraska law, which explicitly mandates the requesting agency’s “justification of the emergency” in writing.

As detailed by the *Examiner*, no-bid dealings are exceedingly rare in Nebraska, comprising just **one-half of one-percent** (0.5%) of our State’s total contracts over the past two years.

More to the point, as Auditor Foley makes clear: “There was no emergency. **It was an invented emergency.**” Nothing about the Legislature’s stated purpose for the \$2.5 million earmark - “growing the state’s bioeconomy industry” - suggested a time-sensitive crisis. And, as Foley points out, the enabling statute gave the agency “15 months to do a 12-month study.”

Failure to Perform and Submission Irregularities. The only thing our Legislature required GSD to submit in exchange for its multimillion-dollar deal was a final report on “the results” of its work by June 30, 2025.

It’s hard to imagine a lower hurdle. But GSD failed to meet it. As of June 30, when the submission deadline passed, “There was no report,” according to Joseph Lauber, the DED’s former Deputy Director. **“It did not exist.”** (*Nebraska Examiner*)

In response to multiple State Auditor follow-up inquiries, on July 11, 2025, Lauber claimed GSD’s report finally “was uploaded” as mandated by state law. But this, too, was false. In reality, Lauber submitted the report later that day; misleadingly told the Auditor’s office he never received an upload-confirmation email (later found in Lauber’s “Deleted Items” folder); and backdated the report’s cover letter to falsely suggest compliance with the June 30 filing deadline. Incredibly, the Auditor’s investigation revealed GSD’s final report was first “Created” on July 9, 2025 - **after** the statutory deadline for its **completion** had passed.

GSD’s late submission - titled [“The Nebraska BioEconomy Handbook”](#) - is a worthless, rushed, meandering mishmash of truisms, clipart, and copy-and-paste filler. Strangely - given the Legislature’s stated goal of “growing the state’s bioeconomy industry” - GSD’s report focuses almost singularly on strict, odd branding admonitions, which GSD then repeatedly violates within its very report. For example, GSD emphasizes:

- “In copy, always refer to the **Nebraska BioEconomy.**”
- “Do not hyphenate **BioEconomy.**”
- “Always capitalize **B** and **E.**”

Pages later in the same report, the first bullet point of GSD’s “Scope of Work” explains: “Support Nebraska Bio-economy [sic] by making connections between Bioeconomy [sic] companies . . .” Which, amazingly, defies GSD’s own guidance, twice, in the same sentence.

All of this begs the question: **Was this all a sham?** Did GSD and Julie Bushell do anything, ever, for the State of Nebraska?

Here, one astonishing tidbit leaps from the pages of Foley's January 6, 2026 letter to the Citizens of Nebraska: When GSD signed its \$2.5 million dollar "consulting" contract, **it didn't even have a bank account**. After the DED emailed Bushell seeking "an image of a voided GSD check" for payment-processing purposes, Bushell "opened a GSD bank account with no initial deposit," then ordered checks, "causing the account to go negative." Apparently, GSD's first-known business transactions were its \$208,333 monthly collections from the State of Nebraska.

Beyond unverifiable generalities, no one affiliated with the Governor has offered any evidence substantiating the fruit of GSD's work on Nebraska's behalf. And in response to the Auditor's direct questioning, the DED admitted it "is unable to ensure an increase in the state's real GDP" resulting from its \$2.5 million GSD contract.

The one "win" repeatedly trophied by Pillen and GSD appears to be illusory. Specifically, in its final report GSD included a November 2024 press release announcing a \$5.5 billion "sustainable aviation fuel" project led by an entity called "DG Fuels," which promised to bring nearly 1,000 jobs to Phelps County, Nebraska.

The CEO of DG Fuels, Michael Darcy, appears to be a snake-oil salesman. His business shenaniganry has been well-documented for decades. As a 2002 article by *The Baltimore Sun* put it, "Darcy has built a reputation based largely on what he has not accomplished, rather than what he has." Auditor Foley's January 6 letter details 11 widely-publicized Darcy projects spanning the U.S. and totaling more than \$40 billion. **None** have materialized. Devastatingly, yet predictably, no work has commenced in Phelps County. In the words of former Congressman Collin Peterson of Minnesota, whose district was similarly disappointed by DG Fuels's false promises: "[T]here is no way in hell that thing is ever going to be built."

Call to Action. This is a travesty. If Jim Pillen wished to play "Sugar Daddy," he should have used his own money - not the State's.

Nebraskans demand transparency, accountability, and faithful execution of the laws. I respectfully request that the Legislature exercise its oversight authority by convening public hearings, compelling the production of relevant documents, and taking sworn testimony concerning the award, administration, and performance of the DED's \$2.5 million no-bid contract.

If that investigation substantiates willful violations of law, abuse of official power, or conduct demonstrating unfitness for office, then impeachment proceedings must follow.

Respectfully submitted,



Ryan Wilkins

cc: Senator John Fredrickson
Senator Dave Murman
Members of the Appropriations Committee
Members of the Government, Military and Veterans Affairs Committee