

March 22, 1983

LB 43

SENATOR HIGGINS: Without wading through the amendments, could you tell me on page 2 of the bill, line 12, it says: "In order that such policy may be realized, sections" blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, "shall be liberally construed to promote an increased awareness by all citizens of governmental activities and afford every opportunity to citizens to witness the operation of government". Has that been changed?

SENATOR HOAGLAND: That has been stricken. That section has been stricken, Senator Higgins.

SENATOR HIGGINS: That has been stricken, so....

SENATOR HOAGLAND: That section of the bill is now gone.

SENATOR HIGGINS: So then the purpose of the bill is no longer to promote an increased awareness by all citizens of government activities and afford the people every opportunity to witness the operation of government, so what have we got left, Senator Hoagland?

SENATOR HOAGLAND: Well, Senator Higgins, you will see that the intent language of the bill that is currently in Section 84-1408 will continue in the statutes. In other words, on lines 3 through 11 of page 2, all of that existing language of the open meetings law will remain in the bill. The strengthened intent language was taken out by the committee. Does that answer your question?

SENATOR HIGGINS: Yes, and....

SENATOR HOAGLAND: So in other words....

SENATOR HIGGINS: ...the original intent of the bill was so that the public would have greater access to public meetings and I would hope that, you know, I have read in the World Herald recently where somebody wrote in and said, why does the County Board and the City Council and the public schools, etcetera, all hold their meetings in the evening when a greater number of people can participate? Now the School Board in Omaha does. I think they even went so far as to suggest that the Legislature be held in the evening so more people could watch us and participate. But I am wondering if this bill does now what your original intent was, to get greater participation by the people. Or is it just going to allow the media greater participation? My problem, when we heard this in committee, was...and I will repeat it again, if we are really going to allow the people access to all public meetings, why do we exclude them from our own