

April 9, 1984

LB 561

take additional instruction and they will have to be approved by the Health Department before they can do this eyedrop treatment. They are not just going to start in doing this because we pass LB 561. They are going to take more educational courses than they already have, and right now I believe they study more about the eye than your regular GP, and they are specialists because that is all they treat are people's eyes. You know, in Omaha I had a young gal call me one day from the jail and she said she didn't have an attorney. So I went down there to the jail and I found out she had an attorney, she had the public defender. She says, yes, but the public defender, he is nothing. I want a real attorney. And I said, listen, the public defender doesn't try corporate tax cases. He doesn't try anything but criminal cases five days a week, day in and day out. He is a specialist in criminal law. And that is what you have got with the optometrists, specialists. They don't deliver babies. They don't take out tonsils. They don't remove appendix and they have years of experience, most of them, and experience itself is a great teacher. So I wish you would, those of you who are thinking of voting against LB 561, think about it from the standpoint that the optometrist already has the training. He has more experience in treating the eyes than anyone else. This bill is going to require even more training before he does one thing that he is not licensed for now and it is certainly going to save money from the taxpayers' standpoint. If those people on Medicaid can go to an optometrist and be treated, they won't be going on to an ophthalmologist for the same treatment and Medicaid will save money and those people will be getting treatment a lot faster than waiting five or six months for an appointment which in itself could make the eye infection or whatever get even worse while we are waiting.

SENATOR KAHLE: One minute.

SENATOR HIGGINS: So I would ask you to please reconsider LB 561 and please for the sake of the people and because we don't want to close this door on the optometrists and say, no, this is private turf, I would ask you to vote for LB 561. Thank you, Senators.