

April 9, 1984

LB 561

SENATOR KAHLE: Senator Carsten. Senator Morehead.

SENATOR MOREHEAD: Mr. President and members of the body, I have refrained from saying too much and now that I feel that everything that I could possibly say will be redundant, I agree with Senator Remmers in pointing out that I think that these people will be very careful in any abuse of this privilege which we would be extending to them. I agree with Senator Landis that it is a very uncomfortable feeling asking to be experts in areas in which we, in fact, are not trained but I suggest that every day we are making decisions in here as members of the Legislature on the basis of the facts that are presented to us from both sides. And so we must make these difficult decisions. I agree with Senator Higgins also that these people are specialists in this area, in this particular area, and that does not in any way demean the medical doctors and the ophthalmologists. I have passed around to you just a bit of information to add to your collection of information and it has listed all of the courses upon which the optometrists must show proficiency in meeting their national boards or taking their national boards. I tell you that they must pass the national boards before they can take the Nebraska license. Now if you look at this list that is presented to you, you will see courses in ocular biology. You see human biology. You will see systemic conditions and, if you look further in the pharmacology courses, you will find an area specifically designated toward the study of steroids which has been brought to you before. I want to also tell you that ninety-two percent of the optometrists have bachelor's degrees before they enter optometric school which is an additional four years for most of these people. I think that again we must keep in mind, like Senator Higgins said, that these people that are desiring this particular legislation must pass an additional exam. They are not going to be grandfathered in and they must show proficiency in this area. I do not think that they will attempt to take over the ophthalmologists' duties nor those of the medical doctor. I think that they will continue to work with these two professions to grant even better eye care for a greater totality of Nebraska. I would ask you also to support this.

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