

quality and competence of the employees, but it certainly did have to do with the characteristics of the system. I think this is a basic right that everybody should have. Everybody is going to have to retire some time. In fact, I would agree with Rex that we are taking heat off the county boards by doing this. But if that is what we are doing, I think it is a good thing that we are doing it. I think it is appropriate that all counties have the chance to participate in a pension program. There are 11 constitutional county offices, designated by law. Can you imagine what would happen if the sheriffs, the clerks, the treasurers, the register of deeds, the assessors, everybody said, well, in the absence of the county board doing it, maybe we should go to the Legislature and try to get an independent retirement plan started for ourselves. It really makes sense, I think, and as far as property tax is concerned, it should be insignificant. It will be participated in by the employees. I would certainly urge the body to support this legislation.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Abboud.

SENATOR ABOUD: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, I serve on the Retirement Committee. I voted against the bill coming out of the committee. The bill is relatively simple, it does one thing. It mandates that all counties be a part of the retirement system. At the present time 34 counties, by their own free will, chose to be a part of this retirement system, including the county in which I reside, Douglas County. But also at the present time 57 other counties have said that they did not want to be a part of the retirement system. The county boards, in their good judgement, said that they did not want to be a part of this system. This bill provides or mandates that all counties have to be a part of the retirement system. I would like to say that there was a consensus among the county officials that they were in favor of the bill, but the impression that I got, from the county representative that presented the bill before the committee, was that there really wasn't a consensus, but it was felt, at least at this particular time, that it was a good bill to discuss before the Legislature. I would probably agree with Senator Haberman's observation that maybe this is a bill that the county officials wouldn't mind having, but they would rather have the Legislature take the heat. They would like to be out in western Nebraska and point to Lincoln and say, well,