

Clark, then Stahmer.

SENATOR CAVANAUGH: Mr. President, I would like to oppose Senator Lewis' amendment. Senator Lewis's amendment really gets to the heart of the matter, the real question involved in this bill. Although, it does make a minor change in the present law whereby the present law, the local communities can fluoridate their water on a vote conducted locally, this could alter that to allow the governing board to make that decision. But it doesn't change the affect, the practical affect, of the situation in the state of Nebraska and that situation is that very many local communities are not fluoridated in the state of Nebraska because there is in the state of Nebraska, as in many other states in the United States, a rather active and vocal minority of people who have taken upon themselves the issue of fluoridation to create an unreasonable political furor over it. In the Committee Hearing that was held here, there was a large number of people that came to oppose fluoridation, primarily on the bases of the fact that they considered it a poison and a plot of somekind to destroy the fabric of American or Nebraskan society. This is a position that has existed and a minority that has existed in this country for, probably, the last fifteen or twenty years. They are totally discredited by all reasonable and significant medical testimony and evidence and the only issue here, actually, is whether this Legislature is going to bend to that pressure group and that vocal minority or whether it is going to assume its responsibility to the people of the state of Nebraska and pass a law that will substantially improve their...the quality of dental health in the state of Nebraska. Whether we're, in this body, willing to take the pressure that I think we're much more capable of taking. We're somewhat removed from the immediate pressures of the local communities, whereas, the people who sit on the local boards and the elected of the local townships, when they are subjected to the fierce economic and propaganda effort that very often accompanies this question of fluoridation, I think local communities are very often bowled over by it. I remember quite clearly, although I was rather young at the time, the fluoridation election in the city of Omaha and it was one of the most vicious and most expensive elections ever conducted in the city of Omaha. The issue finally prevailed in favor of fluoridation and Omaha now has a fluoridated water system, but it was not without great effort and required tremendous effort primarily on the part of the dentists of the community of Omaha. I think the situation of the catalyst doesn't exist in many smaller communities of the state of Nebraska because there isn't a strong community of dentists as there is in Omaha with the financial power to put on the kind of campaign that is very often needed under the political circumstances that surround this issue to effectuate the success of fluoridation. Now, what we should decide here is on the merits of the arguments whether or not fluoridation is a health benefit to the people of the state of Nebraska. If it is, then we have the responsibility to pass this law without the Lewis amendment and make it mandatory and insure that the people of the state of Nebraska are going to insure this health benefit. It is the same responsibility that we face when we are deciding any other health standard to impose in the state of Nebraska, and we don't leave those to Local communities. We don't let each community set its health standards in any other area, and the only reason that we would allow them to set the health standard in this particular area is the fear of the political pressure that surrounds this issue. So, I would urge the defeat of this amendment.

PRESIDENT: The chair recognizes Senator Clark.