

the tasks that are really duties of a qualified medical doctor. I know in the State of Nebraska there are many counties that do not have medical doctors but I certainly would not concede because we have a shortage of doctors that we should provide for nurses, paramedics or perhaps even a well qualified veterinarian to practice medical procedures here in the State of Nebraska. Now as you all know, ophthalmologists are medical doctors. They are trained with the eye. They can treat diseases of the eye. They can perform surgery. Optometrists are trained practitioners. They are not medical doctors. Now there has been considerable encroachment on the medical profession by paramedic groups throughout the United States and I think LB 9 is one good example. I am not opposed to the optometrics and optometrists. I think that they are certainly qualified to do the job that they are trained to do but I think there is a distinction between that that they are performing and that which they are attempting to be allowed to perform. I think it all boils down, ladies and gentlemen, to the fact that optometrists are nonmedical practitioners and they are not equipped through the training that they have had to practice and deal with systemic side effects in emergencies that might come about through the instilling of these drugs, and I would ask those individuals that have been supporting this proposal to this point in time to please very carefully reassess your position and consider these things before making a final determination. Additionally, I received a letter from an insurance company that indicated that there would be no increase to the optometric profession in medical malpractice premiums if they were given the opportunity to instill the drops and the drugs that we are addressing in LB 9.

SPEAKER MARVEL: You have thirty seconds.

SENATOR STONEY: I do have a little bit of understanding and expertise in the insurance field and do know that it is difficult for a company in computing premiums until considerable experience has been gained through loss ratios for them to be able to evaluate what the increase in premiums should be for medical malpractice. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a most serious matter. It is one that should have been handled by optometrists and ophthalmologists and should not be the responsibility of the Nebraska Legislature. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: The Chair recognizes Senator Kelly.

SENATOR KELLY: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, I respectfully yield my time to Senator Barry Reutzel,