

March 27, 1979

LB 143

So I guess that is one point I want to make. A second point that I want to make is that, and it was a tag that was used very successfully last year by the utility industry, this is not a welfare bill and I guess, Senator Warner, I did want to address this comment to you in particular because I think you mentioned the word collections. The bill deals merely with the dispute that an individual has. If they have a dispute then they have the right to go to the utility company and all the bill does is outline the process they go through. They call up the utility. They say I've got a dispute on my bill. They say we will handle it over the phone or come down here and we will talk about it and the individual can do that. If the individual still has a complaint after that then he can go to the hearing officer. The hearing officer is a person that is supplied by the utility. It is a person that works for the utility so there is no cost involved to the utility. All this takes place on a very tight time schedule so in no way does it delay the payment the individual has to make to the utility and I guess I want to emphasize this more than anything else. This is not a welfare bill. This is not a bill that is going to decrease collections. This is a bill that merely allows for due process which is a cornerstone of this democracy of ours. One final provision that this bill has this year which should help the utilities in their collections is the third party notice provision and that is simply this. If at some point in time Senator DeCamp becomes eighty years of age and does not have all control of his mental capacity which I am sure he probably would even at eighty, he could say I would like to have my son or my daughter be able to pay my bill in case I'm going to get shut off. He would so designate that he would like to have that shut off notice mailed to his daughter. His daughter could then make the payment. This would increase collections. Again in closing let me merely say that there is no opposition from the utility industry, merely support or a neutral position. I think the bill has been amended that it takes care of all the concerns that individuals have. It closely follows the Supreme Court decision and for public power that is something that has to be done anyway in this state. I would urge for the adoption of LB 143.

SPEAKER MARVEL: The Chair recognizes Senator DeCamp.

SENATOR DeCAMP: I was going to call for the question