

SENATOR HOAGLAND: Mr. President and colleagues, we debated this bill at length last Friday afternoon and thirteen members were absent so we didn't have enough votes to advance it. I believe there were 22 votes in favor of it at that time. Now since then I have had private conversations with a number of you and what I think I ought to do at this point is make a brief statement in support of the bill and see if anyone has questions and then if we don't perhaps we could go ahead and take a vote on it. As you all know this particular measure is a constitutional amendment and it would put before the voters of the State of Nebraska at the next general election an amendment to redraw the districts of the members of the Associate Justices of the Nebraska Supreme Court and it would provide that two Associate Justices are to be taken from each of the three Congressional Districts and the amendment would also provide that should there come a time when we only have two Congressional Districts in Nebraska, why then three judges we would be taking from each of the two Congressional Districts. Of course we are not anticipating that to happen any time soon. Now the fundamental purpose of the amendment is to take the politics out of the process of drawing districts for members of the Nebraska Supreme Court permanently so that there won't be any more gerrymandering or any more political tinkering with judicial districts. There, of course, will be political considerations when the Congressional Districts are redrawn every ten years but the considerations will focus on the drawing of Congressional Districts, not on the drawing of Supreme Court districts. Now let me make one final point. There has been quite a bit of criticism about this particular amendment that it is intended to give Omaha one more seat on the Nebraska Supreme Court. Now let me say this to that. Now first of all, Omaha was severely and unfairly gerrymandered the last time these districts for the Nebraska Supreme Court were drawn. Many of the lawyers that live south, I believe, of Center or Pacific Street in Omaha are included in a district that goes all the way down to the Kansas border. Many of Omaha's finest lawyers that live west of 72nd Street are included in a district that includes all of Lincoln and then there is a district that includes downtown Omaha. Now the way the districts are currently drawn, there is a distinct possibility that Omaha could have three Justices on the Supreme Court. If a Governor from Omaha were elected or for some other reason there were a determined effort to give Omaha three Supreme Court Judges, that could happen. Now if this particular amendment takes place, why there could only be two from that Congressional District and Omaha will permanently be limited to two as long as there are three Congressional Districts. Now, my view is that gerrymandering has no place in drawing districts