

SENATOR SIECK: Here we go again. Omaha wants to be exempted. They have got their little island up there. Pretty soon we will have another state I believe. This bill does not do what Venditte says and I am real perturbed about this. We did include Omaha when we drafted the bill. The City Attorney, Ken Bunger, worked with us and felt that this was ideal for their situation and they could be included. Now I was well aware of the city ordinance regarding group homes and we talked extensively with that attorney's office. Now let me point out that LB 525 covers a very, a very small percentage of the group homes included in the Omaha ordinance. First, the Omaha ordinance covers group homes of up to two hundred or more residents. I certainly understand why Omaha would want control of larger facilities. They should be very carefully placed because they could damage the balance of a neighborhood. LB 525, on the other hand, only allows for group homes of up to eight residents. With such size restrictions, the homes allowed in LB 525 can be located very smoothly in any neighborhood. Now, secondly, the Omaha ordinance addresses many different types of group homes which LB 525 does not include in its definition. For instance, the Omaha ordinance covers alcoholism, mental health and correction group homes. LB 525 only covers group homes for the mentally retarded, cerebral palsy and autistic. Again experience has shown that a group home for the developmentally disabled can be effectively and plausibly located anywhere so long as it is of reasonable size. In conclusion, LB 525 would remove from the authority of the Omaha city ordinance a very, a very small group homes and only those serving the developmentally disabled. Beyond that, the provisions of the Omaha ordinance would apply. Now at the present time, Omaha has ten of these group homes as I designate in my bill and I think the total amount that is allowed in this bill for the City of Omaha until it goes back to the authority of the city is eighteen. Now we are just talking about eight group homes and we haven't went away from the ordinance. We are allowing them that half mile discretion from any group home, and that means the group homes that they have established, not just the group homes of the mentally retarded. That means all the group homes. I think that this compromise approach which we drew up with the Nebraska League of Municipalities effectively assists every municipality in the State of Nebraska and I would really ask you not to put this amendment on the bill because I don't feel that it is good legislation to pick out one portion of our state from another portion. Everyone should be treated fairly. Thank you.