

SENATOR BEUTLER: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, basically this bill would in technical language give the county board concurrent jurisdiction with the district courts in the dissolution of marriage actions and related matters. It means simply that the county courts can handle marriage matters and related matters now as well as the district court if this bill is passed. To give you a little background, the idea originally came...Senator Haberman came to the Judiciary Committee two or three years ago and he said, out in my district in western Nebraska, the district court judge, he has nine or ten different counties and he never gets around but once a month or once over a particular time period, and Senator Haberman can probably relate that better to you than I can. And he said all of these marriage actions, 95 percent of them, and this is true everywhere, 95 percent of them are consent, that is, the lawyers get together on each side and they agree to what the property settlement is going to be, and the custody, they have it all worked out and 95 percent of the time when they walk in the court they say, judge, this is what we have worked out, approve it. And 95 percent of the time the judge approves it. In other words, they are perfunctory in nature. But out in Senator Haberman's district the two lawyers can agree upon it but the district judge isn't coming back for a month and a half and so the whole thing is held up for a month and a half when a county judge might be sitting right there in the same town. So what the bill says is that you can go to the county judge now and get these perfunctory things taken care of. Now the bill just doesn't say perfunctory things, it has to do with everything having to do with domestic relations, marriage, divorces. But these types of actions are a significant part of the workload of the district courts and so by allowing the attorneys actually to file in one of the two places, you will have the effect also of evening out the workloads as between the county and the district courts. So I think it has that positive benefit in addition to solving Senator Haberman's problem of getting somebody there who can act on the matter in a short period of time. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I will stop and let Senator Haberman address the problem.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Haberman and Senator Higgins is on the want list.