

SENATOR NELSON: A question of Senator Higgins, please.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Yes, Senator.

SENATOR NELSON: Does Omaha have a county hospital for this purpose, I am just asking?

SENATOR HIGGINS: No, we used to have but our county hospital has pretty much been turned into a psychiatric and geriatric nursing home. St. Joseph Hospital provides 60 to 70 percent of all the indigent care or the care for the indigent in Douglas County, and not only Douglas County. They get indigents from other counties in the eastern part of the state.

SENATOR NELSON: In other words Omaha really doesn't have a...when I used to live there, they had a county hospital for this purpose or the police or someone on Douglas Street or so on.

SENATOR HIGGINS: We used to have...

SENATOR NELSON: And that is not available any longer?

SENATOR HIGGINS: No, Senator, a number of years ago the county board did away with it and contracted with hospitals that now take care of it under a Medicaid type thing but none of the other hospitals want to take them because they figure the county doesn't pay them enough.

SENATOR NELSON: Thanks.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the Legislature, I rise to speak quietly in opposition to Senator Higgins' amendment. I can appreciate the need that Senator Higgins has to provide an exemption from the utilities sales tax for St. Joseph Hospital. It is not an unreasonable item. It is a small item in amount, apparently, \$35,000, but it is very important as far as I am concerned that when we begin to close up exemptions and loopholes we close them up, and we not provide exemptions on exemptions. Now St. Joseph Hospital, while it is a wonderful organization and a wonderful institution, is now a