

SENATOR HIGGINS: Thank you, Mr. President. It wasn't my understanding that there was going to be any new people added to the Ombudsman's office. But I see now, looking at the fiscal note, that there would be. It was my understanding that, under this bill, the employee could report anything to any elected official. Senator Landis, is that correct? He shakes his head yes, it is correct. So you would not necessarily have to have new staff in the Ombudsman's office? Senator Wesely and Senator Landis both say we do not need, and, therefore, there is no A bill on it Senator Wesely is saying. So, in that case, as long as you can report to any elected official, and we are not going to have a fiscal impact, because there is no A bill, then I guess I have to disagree with my good friend Senator Haberman's previous remarks. Senator Landis, do you or do you not need an A bill to hire a new employee for the Ombudsman's office?

SENATOR LANDIS: If we contemplated an increase in expenditures we would have an A bill. We don't, one of the reason being, we changed from "shall" to "may" the power to investigate. So the Ombudsman can, under their current ability to investigate and the current manpower needs, allocate their manpower to this kind of investigation. By saying "may" you get to the place where they can book up the people right now to where they will do whatever work is necessary, but if there is more work than that they can turn it down. No new people, no A bill, no expenditures.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Do you know how many people they have in the Ombudsman's office now?

SENATOR LANDIS: They have at least two, and I'm not sure if they have more than that.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Two, one who does nothing but investigate complaints from those incarcerated in prison, and the other one who takes care of the rest of the population, correct?

SENATOR LANDIS: As a matter of fact I think there are two that do public kinds of complaints. As you recall the public at large are as capable of using the Ombudsman's office. I believe there are two people that do that task.

SENATOR HIGGINS: I think if you ask 9 out of 10 people in Nebraska they wouldn't know that we had an Ombudsman. Thank