

In 1932 the voters in North Dakota initiated a measure that required all corporations in North Dakota, except cooperative corporations, to divest themselves of their corporate land holdings in North Dakota within a period of 10 years. That particular divestiture, that particular divestiture was challenged in the United States Supreme Court. In the case of Asbury Hospital v. Cass County the United States Supreme Court, in 1943, held that a state could properly say who could own the land and that that divestiture requirement was not unconstitutional under the United States Constitution. Starting in the 1970s, and this is such an important point for us to take into the marrow of our bones and to recognize, starting in the 1970s our sister farm states, one, by one, by one, by one passed statutes saying that corporations could not own farm and ranchland. The State of Iowa did so, the State of South Dakota did so, the State of Oklahoma did so, the State of Wisconsin did so, the State of Missouri did so. The State of Kansas now decided it would clean up the old 1931 decisions, and did so. The State of North Dakota decided they would alter the way that divestiture requirement operated, and did so, and I haven't discovered that the world has come apart. The world has not come apart in Iowa, and in Kansas, and in Oklahoma, and in Missouri, and in Wisconsin, and in Minnesota. I forgot to mention that state. The world didn't come unglued. It was just another legislative operative fact that the people in those states, through their elected representatives, concluded that corporations in those states ought not to own the land. But the story in Nebraska during the same time period was quite different. In 1969 some Nebraska citizens came to this Legislature and said, we do not think that corporations ought to own farm and ranchlands. And they had a man who presented a legislative bill to that effect, which was killed, which was killed. They came back in '72 and '73 and '75 and '77 and '78 and '79, in fact, at one time Senator DeCamp was one of their sponsors. They came back 16 times, 16 times they came to this body, from 1969 through 1982...through 1981, that was the last attempt. They came back 16 times. And like old Pharaoh talking to Moses, we wouldn't let that issue go, we wouldn't let it go notwithstanding the experience of our sister farm states. We refuse to pass the statutes. We refuse to send to the voters the constitutional amendment, we closed the door, we closed our hearts, we said, no. So, finally, the people did the only thing that the people can do when a Legislature has hardened its heart to an issue,