

would give optometrists the authority to administer steroids, to administer antiviral and antifungal medications, that, number one, are intended principally for the treatment of serious eye conditions, putting them in the position of treating serious eye conditions and, number two, which can have systemic side effects that only people trained in pharmacology with a medical school education as to how drugs affect the entire system should be allowed to give. Now there is a fundamental, philosophical problem, it seems to me, with the idea of having nonphysicians act as physicians. The ability to administer these kind of drugs go far beyond the stated goal of LB 131 which is to be able to prescribe treatment for minor infections and minor irritations to the eye. Now, if this amendment is adopted, it will leave to the optometrist the authority to administer medications like Neosporin, other antibiotics that can be bought over the counter but it will take away their ability particularly to administer steroids. Now, those kind of drugs are very dangerous. They are meant for serious conditions of the eye, not for minor conditions of the eye, and most important, those kind of drugs when administered can have serious side effects that only physicians are able to detect. Now, if this amendment is adopted, why then this bill would be reduced to a more conservative approach in terms of allowing optometrists to become, in effect, physicians for treatment of a condition of the eye. I think it makes sense. I simply don't believe that the optometrists have adequate training, optometrists are not physicians, to be given the authority to be able to administer drugs that are as serious as this and that can have side effects of these ramifications. Now, I recognize that Senator Chronister and the other proponents of the bill are relying on the task force report, the task force report that, incidentally, Dr. Wright in his lengthy opinion declined to approve, but if you look closely at the minority report of the task force report, you will see that the task force specifically indicated that they were uncertain as to whether or not optometrists should be allowed to administer these kinds of dangerous drugs, these kinds of prescription drugs, and there was considerable feeling in the task force as reflected by the notes and as reflected by the opinion that the members of the task force really didn't feel competent to pass on the issue of whether or not optometrists should have the authority to administer these specific kinds of drugs. Now, I think we need to be cautious. I think if we are moving into uncharted areas