

here of allowing optometrists to become physicians to treat conditions of the eye, it is important for us to proceed cautiously and not to allow them to administer steroids, not to allow them to administer antiviral and antifungal medications for the reasons stated. Now, I would be happy to attempt to answer any questions about the scope or the reach of this amendment but again I would encourage the body to proceed cautiously in this area. I think this is a reasonable amendment that is intended to protect the public. It is intended to leave the care of major eye conditions in the hands of physicians and is particularly intended to avoid a situation where a patient will present with a serious condition eye condition steroids or these other medications could be administered which will have the effect of disguising the severity of that eye condition until it is too late...

SPEAKER NICHOL: Five minutes.

SENATOR HOAGLAND: ...until by the time the patient gets to a physician who accurately diagnoses the condition and applies appropriate remedies, partial blindness or complete blindness may have resulted. So I would encourage the adoption of this amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER NICHOL: Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the Legislature, this amendment that Senator Hoagland and I have both filed is an amendment that, as Senator Hoagland has very carefully described and articulated, would excise from LB 131 the ability of the optometrists to administer certain drugs to the eyeball, the eyelid, et cetera. Now, I know that a number of members in our Legislature feel that it is important to provide optometrists a lot of additional authority because it is the view of many of us here that optometrists are sort of front line troops in terms of eye care and eye maintenance. There are an awful lot more optometrists in Nebraska than there are eye doctors, than there are ophthalmologists. In fact, I think...well, I don't recall the numbers but there are few ophthalmologists in relationship to the optometrists. The fact that we fail to consider actively and the fact that was very carefully considered by the 407 task force that dealt with this issue is that while there may be few ophthalmologists to optometrists, there are many physicians. There are many,