

I am representing the people in my district, the 28th District, that my silence cannot be bought and my vote is not for sale. I am not an enemy of the telephone company. I am here to represent the interests of my constituents. I agree with Senator Harris a few days ago when he said I am not for or against the telephone company, I am for the people, and that is who I am for, the constituents that I represent, the people that have to use the phones, and if they have a rate increase, that should have a fair procedure to challenge that rate increase if that rate increase is unfair. This bill is fraught with procedural problems. Senator Landis, my friend, has pointed out that we should return it to committee for amendments. That is what should have been done, actually, but there was too much force, too much power behind the bill, so we proceeded to amend it on the floor. AT&T was initially for it and then they backed off, and then they were for it. Now I read something that the small phone companies are against the bill. It is fraught with all kinds of procedural problems. I respect Senator Hoagland very much. He is a very, very good lawyer. I respect his opinion on lots of legal matters but it seems to me what he is saying is, granted it is a bad piece of legislation, we have got a problem, but let's pass this bad legislation as it is, and if the courts say it is unconstitutional, or if it doesn't work out, we can always come back and correct it. I don't think that is our function as legislators. The courts always get accused of acting like Legislatures and making law. I think it is our function as a Legislature to make good law and to provide fair procedures so that our constituents have a right to protest any rate increase. We have given them a monopoly. Give them the chance to protest if that monopoly abuses its privileges with respect to increasing the rates. The phone company has got a problem. I don't think I am their enemy. I agree with that. If they come back next year with a bill that meets the constitutional requirements, that it is a fair bill for the consumers, that provides fair procedures, I will be the first to lend my support to that type of bill, but I am not going to lend my support to the type of bill we have before us now. It is not good legislation. I hope that this vote that was taken on the motion of Senator Abboud's to return to Select File is not an indication of how the vote is going to go on approval or voting to advance the bill for the Governor's signature. I hope that your votes are not etched in stone at this point. I hope that the senators in this body are open-minded, will consider the arguments on the floor, and vote not to advance this bill. Let the phone company come back with a bill that we can live with, that will be fair to the people we represent. I thank you and I