

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY THE CLERK OF THE LEGISLATURE
Transcriber's Office
FLOOR DEBATE

March 7, 2001

LB 227

SENATOR THOMPSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, members of the body. Just to answer a couple of questions and, first of all, I probably need to apologize to Senator Hilgert, because I did look into his suggestion and discovered it's already the law, and I have a copy. Signage indicating smoke-free/smoking designated areas, or smoking in its entirety must be posted on each entrance. I'm sorry...well, I'll just get back to my closing. I think what we're seeing here today is an attempt from...to cloud the bill with a discussion of going farther and doing other things that really are not an effort to correct this bill but more an effort to raise questions for you to decide whether or not to vote for this bill, and so I'm going to use my closing to convince you, I hope, to just look at the bill as it's been presented and make your decision on that basis. The...couple of things to respond to, we'd examined two areas. One was exempting out the smaller restaurants, kind of getting to Senator Cunningham's issue of the small restaurants in rural areas. They may or may not be small but they...we did have an amendment, which this body defeated, to exempt out restaurants, the smaller restaurants, from this bill. We also had a definition in the bill, to get to Senator Bromm's question. There were a lot of questions about having the definition in the bill. As a compromise, I offered to strike that definition from the bill, putting it back to Department of Health and Human Services. The body also supported that. So we had some decision making on both exempting out smaller restaurants and also exempting out the definition of a bar. So we're back now to the main bill, and what the bill attempts to do is to make dining areas in restaurants smoke free, protecting workers, protecting families and children. We shouldn't tell the families of Nebraska that they shouldn't be able to go out to eat. This is a question about accommodation and who we're accommodating. As everyone stated, we know that environmental tobacco smoke is dangerous to people. It's dangerous to people who have asthma. It's dangerous to people with respiratory diseases. But just the average person sitting near environmental tobacco smoke will, in their bloodstream, absorb some of those toxins. They'll also have a chance of itchy eyes, sneezing, wheezing. It's also, as...as another person pointed out the Harvard study, it can cause heart attacks. We know