

March 30, 1979

LB 260

decriminalize alcoholism. Then we get into drunk driving and everything else beside the point attempting to say that this is the wrong thing to do. We should have continued to try to solve this problem. I think we're on the right track by charging the beer, wine and liquor industry. After all, if we didn't have it we wouldn't have the problem, and that's where we should get our money. Let's listen to Senator Cullan for a minute here and make the right decision. Thank you.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Senator Wesely, do you wish on the... the motion is on the adoption of the Committee amendments as amended.

SENATOR WESELY: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the amendments, and I rise in support of LB 260. I do so somewhat reluctantly however, as you may note in the bill book, I was present but did not vote on the advancement of this bill, and it specifically related to these Committee amendments. My concern is one that is shared by Senator Schmit and by other senators who have stood before you and talked about the need to review and analyze the present alcoholism programs we have in the State of Nebraska to find out whether they are doing the job, whether they are accomplishing their goals, and whether they are helping to deal with the very serious problem, and I agree. I think we need to do that review. I think we need to take a look at the present programs we have, but...but we need to have the time to do that. We need to have an interim study, and I intend, I think, as a member of the Public Health and Welfare Committee to look very long and hard at this problem, and I think the Committee has made a commitment as well. But there's another part of the bill. That's dealing with the taxes on alcohol in this state, and that's a very separate issue I think in this instance, and I think it's the water is being muddled to a great degree by the discussions about the programs and the problems that they're having. I agree there's a problem there. I agree we have to look at it. Let's look at the other side. How are we raising the funds that we're using to provide some alcoholism programs in this state? That's another issue completely. We have had, what I consider to be, an inequitable system I think in assessing alcoholism...I mean alcohol products for tax purposes to provide for programs for alcoholism. The bill, as amended, will I think help to make more equitable the tax structure on alcohol in the state of Nebraska. It will change the wine and the beer, and distilled spirits, percentages involved in taxes, and I think will raise the money we need for programs in a more fair