

April 9, 1979

LB 457

monthly sends out billings to all of the customers and there are a lot of other mailings that districts have as a matter of course, and as I understand this bill, why those billings would include the fact that a particular meeting on rates is going to take place and it would not necessarily require a separate mailing. Now I think it is a good clean open government measure that is not going to hurt anybody, and on the plus side, there is several advantages. Now in Omaha not too recently I think we saw the Omaha Public Power District make a major public relations mistake in the way it went about raising its own salaries. Now I don't want to get to the issue of whether the salary increases were warranted or not. They were an increase of salary from approximately \$2400 a year to approximately \$3600 a year for board members who spend an enormous amount of time doing the business of the district and I think that the salary increases probably were warranted given the extent of their responsibilities and the amount of time that it took them to do it but the real difficulty was the method by which they went about bringing about those salary increases. It was done with very little notice to the public. It was done in a relatively surreptitious way and in a way that really infuriated a number of people around Omaha, again not so much because of the amount involved, but because of the way it was done. Now I think having open meetings requirements of this sort is going to help the district to forestall the making of similar mistakes. I think that when public hearings are conducted and when people are given the opportunity to come point out the deficiencies or the discrepancies in anticipated action, why a lot of major mistakes can be avoided. I don't think it hurts to write into the law provisions that require public input. I don't think it is going to increase the cost that much and, again, I think that asking for public input on really the one decision that public power districts make that affect their citizenry more than any other is just a good important open government measure and we ought to support it. Thank you for your attention.

SENATOR NICHOL: Senator Kelly, you are to speak on the bill next but we have a motion, two motions on the desk, I understand, so perhaps we had better take those before somebody would call the question and we would have to vote on the amendments so we probably should take these two amendments first, Senator Kelly. Mr. Clerk.

CLERK: Mr. President, Senator Goodrich moves to refer LB 457 to the Public Works Committee to coordinate with other public power legislation.