

the reason that Senator Haberman mentioned. The retailers in this state are afraid of that competition. They are afraid that they are going to lose some business to the grocery stores and the people that are selling wine and I guess when you look at business, and I guess sitting on the Health and Welfare Committee we are always looking at regulations and how regulations affect industry and so forth because many of the regulatory processes we have in the State of Nebraska come through that committee, and you have to ask yourself a philosophical question. Why do you impose regulation on an industry? You propose regulation on an industry to protect the public, and so here, we want to make sure that the availability of alcohol is not excessive but we are not trying to protect. It should not be the function of state government to limit the competition in this area. We shouldn't protect those retailers who have the Class C and D permits. That is where the opposition is coming from, from those marginal retailers out there who are afraid that if the grocery store or some of the other people who sell beer start to sell wine that they are going to face serious financial problems. Well, if they can't compete, that is their problem. I don't think the state should be in the business of protecting them and that is what we are doing with the current licensing structure. I see no reason for us to indefinitely postpone this bill. It is logical if we provide beer and wine on-sale that we should provide beer and wine off-sale. It just doesn't make any sense to have the licensing structure any differently than is proposed under LB 258. Another point, this particular bill is a result of an interim study which the Miscellaneous Subjects Committee did. It is one of the few provisions of that interim study that has not been implemented in statute and I would suggest that we pass this bill, create a more fair and equitable licensing structure and prevent the situation we have now where we are protecting those retailers from competition. If the liquor industry is like other industries, competition is healthy and there is no public protection issue here so I see no reason for us to indefinitely postpone LB 258. I urge you to reject the Vickers motion and to advance this bill this afternoon.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Nichol. Is Senator Nichol in the room? Senator Kahle.

SENATOR KAHLE: Mr. Chairman and members, I would like to get a little clarification on some of the things that may happen in a grocery store. I don't know whether Senator Hefner or somebody else might be able to answer. Would you be able to buy beer and wine on food stamps in a grocery store? The answer is what? Okay.