

April 7, 1981

LB 478

"veteran" with the word "person" and deletes all the other categories. The simple result is that the exemption would apply to all who are totally disabled. I take it that this was the original intent of the bill because the language down in the latter part of the bill says that the application for such exemption shall include the sworn statement of a qualified medical physician or certification from a Veterans Administration affirming that the homeowner is totally disabled. That is the objective, to help totally disabled persons. So with that, I offer the amendment that the provisions of the bill be extended to all disabled persons regardless of the cause of their disablement or regardless of the specific results as far as their physical capabilities are concerned that result in the disablement. I think we should apply it to all or to none.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR VARD JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, members of the body, I rise in opposition to the Beutler amendment. His amendment sounds very attractive and very good but one of the reasons I rise in opposition to the amendment, Senator Beutler, is the fact that you and I don't have a good fix right now on the numbers of persons in this state who are totally disabled or as to what the ultimate price tag of that amendment would be. I read an article in the...for some reason I have become an aficionado of the publication by the American Commission on Intergovernmental Relations which we all get like every three months and there was an article appearing about a year ago in conjunction with the growth of federal government and the question was, why is it that federal government has grown as much as it has grown, and one of the answers that was given following a very thoughtful study is that Congress so often made good changes in the law but didn't fully know exactly what those changes would do, and believe it or not, the example that was cited, one of the several examples that was cited, was a 1954 amendment to the Social Security Act which allowed persons who become totally disabled to begin to collect social security benefits. But in 1954 the projected cost of that program by 1970 was something like \$600 million. It turned out that by 1970 the actual cost of that program was in the neighborhood of four or five billion dollars and that by 1980 that program is now costing \$14 billion to the country, and in fact that is one of those areas where some changes are being discussed fairly actively in Congress in terms of the Social Security Act. Now I recognize that the homestead exemption program is small potatoes in comparison to the Social Security Act. In fact the dollar amount here might be very modest but I just don't know the answer and I suspect Senator Beutler doesn't either.