

April 7, 1981

LB 477

SENATOR NICHOL: Mr. President, members of the Legislature, in discussion on this bill Senator Pirsch requested that the Judiciary Committee attach a "victims and witnesses of crimes bill of rights". The amendment is essentially a public policy statement by the Legislature indicating the Legislature's concern for the victims and the witnesses of crimes. I move for the adoption of the committee amendment, Mr. President.

SPEAKER MARVEL: All those in favor of Senator Nichol's motion vote aye, opposed vote no. Record.

CLERK: 27 ayes, 0 nays on the motion to adopt the committee amendments, Mr. President.

SPEAKER MARVEL: Motion is carried, the amendment is adopted. Senator Pirsch, you have the floor.

SENATOR PIRSCH: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Regarding the bill 477, as many of you know I have been interested in the needs of victims and witnesses for a long time and I am a member of the national organization of victim assistance. LB 477 is a means of aiding these victims and witnesses by helping them through the criminal justice system. It does not take away any protection or safeguard that is provided the defendant under the criminal justice system. LB 477 would establish a crime victim and witness assistance fund to be administered by the Nebraska Commission of law enforcement and criminal justice. It would. . .it would use already existing centers as well as some new offices created. These centers would utilize a wide volunteer base. Where would these centers be? We have had requests and the people who testified in front of the committee were the Lancaster County Attorney, the Lincoln Police Department, the Kearney Police Department, those kind of agencies which are on the...in the forefront in dealing with victims. Who would be their wide volunteer base? I have passed out a letter from the National Jewish Council of Women who are very interested in this, incidentally this was an unsolicited letter that they sent to me, it would be these kind of groups as well as the Junior League has expressed interest in this. Statistics suggest that one in three Americans are criminally victimized each year. More than that are victimized by crimes which lack precise statutory definition. Reported crime rose 9% during the first half of 1979, robbery rose 15%, forceable rape and aggravated assault rose 11%, murder increased 9%. In a country where crime is a prevalent part of daily life and a growing source of fear and destruction, it is disturbing