

April 8, 1981

LB 249

SENATOR CULLAN: If we continue to isolate bureaucrats from politics, we will strangle state government, for to isolate the Department of Health from politics is to isolate it from the people. I ask you to join me in voting for good government, and I ask you to join me in voting for LB 249.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Higgins, on the bill.

SENATOR HIGGINS: Mr. President, members of the body, I am also a member of the Public Health Department, or Public Health and Welfare Committee, and I feel that somebody has to be the devil's advocate for the other side. Senator Cullan is a very persuasive orator so I do feel compelled to speak for the other side. Number one, Senator Cullan mentioned two people on the Board of Health that could not adequately explain to him the difference between his bill and another bill on certificate of need. One of the gentlemen he questioned told him that he had only been on the board since December and that he honestly couldn't remember all of the aspects of those two bills. The other member, a woman, was Chairman of the legislative committee and, Senator Cullan, I believe you said that nobody could tell you even one thing about that certificate of need bill, and I believe the woman spoke out and said, the one thing I do recall, and she said we studied both bills extensively but it was some time ago, is there is great concern about nursing homes being sold whether or not for profit. So she did remember one thing and as she repeatedly said in the twenty minutes she was cross-examined, had she her own notes in front of her about the two bills she could have explained why they took the position they did. So I think in all fairness to the members of the Board of Health that were interviewed that day, I should point that out. Also, in a communication I received from one of the members, they have stated this, "The Governor presently has many avenues of influence on activities of the Department. He appoints the Board of Health. He is an ex officio member of the Board." He can formally participate or can communicate with members of the Board as well as any of us Senators or any citizen of the State of Nebraska, but sadly few do. The Governor does have access to the Director and his staff. The Governor has a large measure of budgetary control which has significant impact on program direction. I think anybody here that thinks politics isn't played every day is being naive, and to say that because they disagree with this bill and that they don't trust politicians, they are different from the rest of the population is...I just