

March 18, 1982

LB 726

the scope of this problem is not generally understood. A 1978 study by the U.S. Corps of Engineers is very revealing. The study which is entitled "The Wetlands Inventory of the Omaha District" and through the use of a remote sensing laboratory and using satellite imagery the study concluded there are 1,190,285 acres of sub-irrigated meadows in the Sandhills region, that excludes open water marshes and riparian land along rivers. Imagine if you will for a second the additional groundwater development that would be necessary if these subirrigated acres were lost. Those ranchers would be forced to irrigate in order to survive. If we fail to protect subirrigation in the State of Nebraska, we are moving down the road to forcing tremendous development of the Sandhills....

PRESIDENT: One minute, Senator Cullan.

SENATOR CULLAN: ...that is land that has been irrigated naturally for a century. Think of those million acres when you vote on this bill. Think about this issue. Allow the local people through their Natural Resource Districts to have this simple tool to protect subirrigated acres in the State of Nebraska. I urge you, vote for LB 726 for the Sandhills.

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Vickers.

SENATOR VICKERS: Thank you, Mr. President. Mr. President and members, Senator Beutler has outlined the bill very thoroughly. Senator Cullan has explained some of the reasons for the need for LB 726. I would like to just briefly tell you from my perspective what LB 726 does and what it doesn't do. First of all, the Public Works Committee a couple of years ago when I was a member of it held some hearings across the Sandhills, one in Mullen, one in Ord, and then again last year held hearings in those two cities. We heard from a number of people and a number of people in those areas are concerned. They are concerned about how their wet hay meadows are being affected. They are concerned about how their lakes and their streams in those areas might be affected as irrigation development takes place. The issue is very clear that should the local people have the authority and the ability to control the top of their aquifer, or should they only have the ability to control the aquifer following a significant decline? Now it seems to me that if it is the concern of the people, that we should put the criteria in the statute to meet that concern. There was a poll conducted of the Sandhills people and more than 82