

March 24, 1982

LB 761

this, we have found over the course of the fall that there were a wide range of estimates as to what was needed. We went everywhere from about half a million dollars up to over \$2 million to try and renovate that building. When you have that wide a variance of what may be necessary to protect our collection at Morrill Hall, it became clear that we needed to be more detailed and so all we asked for in LB 632 was the \$20,000 to analyze and provide the program statement that we need to identify the cost. So that is the background of the issue. The hearing was held on LB 632 and as part of your handout I listed the people that testified, and there were a great many people that testified representing the University, Chamber of Commerce, the PTAs, the teachers and students and so on and so forth. In other words, there was a great deal of support for the bill. The bill was killed by the committee and that was because it wasn't a priority bill and the money was appropriated by the committee and placed in the appropriations bill recognizing the strong support for the idea and for the proposal. However, when the Governor came back with the problems that we have with the economy, the committee then removed that \$20,000 addition and we are back to the place at which we started. So rather than just accept, I suppose, the situation, I thought that with Senator Remmers and Senator Rumery and I that we should raise the issue with you and ask merely for the \$20,000 as we did in the bill to try and look at the problem so we have an idea of how much cost we have. That is really what we are trying to ask for at this time. As you probably know, Morrill Hall is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the State of Nebraska. We have estimates of anywhere from 150,000 to 225,000 people over the last five years each year visit the hall and as I said, that is one of the biggest tourist attractions in the state. The other factor that we have is that the collection itself is one of the best and most recognized worldwide collections of fossils in the entire world. So it seems to me that there is a great pride that Nebraskan's share for our Morrill Hall for our state museum, and we have seen this as I have gotten many letters across the state in support of this proposal. The University is in support of the attempt to try and do something about the problem, and there are many others as well who care very much about the situation. So that is the proposal. We are asking \$20,000. We are asking for a program statement to identify how much cost we are talking about with the Morrill Hall renovation and with that program statement prepared sometime next year this Legislature can decide at that time how best to proceed. All we are asking for now is the information we need to determine whether or not how much