

March 29, 1982

LB 603

SENATOR DWORAK: Thank you, Senator Cullan. Thank you, Senator Clark.

SENATOR CLARK: Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I certainly rise in support of Senator Cullan's amendment to the committee amendment. This morning we heard a number of speeches on this floor from members asking how we could have the temerity in these difficult and troubled economic times to provide our judges any kind of a pay increase whatsoever, particularly when more and more individuals in our society were being laid off, when farmers are having a difficult time with their income, when state employees were being asked by the Governor and by members of this body to accept very small pay raises, how we could go for a salary plan that would provide our judges a 5 percent pay increase next year and a 5 percent pay increase the following year. Now as I listened to those speeches I turned to the United States Constitution and to the Preamble which says: "We, the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." The second thing that we set out in our Constitution was to establish justice. Now even in the most difficult of economic times we have got to have a judiciary that is well versed in the law, that is experienced in deciding difficult cases and that exercises great wisdom in applying the law to the facts and arriving at a more perfect justice for us and our society. And over the long pull, we in this state have tried conscientiously to place on our benches the ablest women and men to function as our judges. But it would be a mistake, it would be folly, it would do them, our state and our sense of justice a disservice for us not to provide them with a reasonable measure of compensation. Thursday I had a small matter in front of Judge Robert McGowan who is one of the two County Court Judges in Douglas County, and Judge McGowan was appointed to the bench in my recollection in 1972, came out of private practice to serve as a County Judge. Judge McGowan was one of the principal architects of the Nebraska Probate Code. Judge McGowan is probably regarded by his fellow jurists as Nebraska's leading expert on the Nebraska Probate Code. It is Judge McGowan who will, in a sense, be passing judgment on the transmission of wealth in our society from generation to generation as a probate judge, who said this to me, Vard, he said, I just cannot beg anymore for a pay increase. The time is approaching when I will leave the bench and go into other work. Last