

punishment for which can be deprivation of liberty. If a citizen is not entitled to appeal to the Supreme Court in a situation such as that, what other type of circumstance would justify the existence of a Supreme Court? Is it more important that a big shot involved in a civil action be entitled to appeal to the Supreme Court than a citizen charged by his or her own government with a crime? Is it more important that the gas company dealing with its underground pipelines, the railroad companies, and others who don't want to pay taxes, should have a greater claim on the Supreme Court's time than a citizen charged with a crime? I don't think so. The way this constitutional amendment has been drafted, the only cases the Supreme Court is required to hear are those involving capital offenses or where the death penalty is involved. Those cases are very few in Nebraska so you can just about discount them as taking any time from the Supreme Court. What other category is entitled as a right under the Constitution? If a statute's constitutionality is challenged. Those are the only two categories that the Supreme Court is required to hear. How much time will that take? What you are creating under this constitutional amendment is a court with seven judges paid handsomely with very little work under the Constitution that they are required to do. Requirements are placed on the Governor under the Constitution. Requirements are placed on the Legislature under the Constitution. Very little in the way of a requirement will be placed on these judges. I cannot fault them for trying to lighten their workload. Most people would like to be paid for doing nothing. Many people would like to be paid much for doing little, and that is what the court is after. I don't think we should glamorize and romanticize the concept of a Supreme Court so that whatever they bring to us and seek will automatically be granted. I have been in this Legislature going on 20 years and I have been a member of the Judiciary Committee all of that time. Whenever the Supreme Court or any other collection of judges have come before the Judiciary Committee, they are seeking more judges, more money, less work. They never have come during my 20 years, the Supreme Court, with a proposal to improve the quality of justice, to tighten up the requirements in terms of qualification for judges. They will not deal with disparate sentencing that occurs throughout the judicial system in this state whereby racial minorities, poor people, are given the short end of the stick in the form of severe punishments for the same offenses committed by others who have money, political clout, or social status. All of those matters are a part of this constitutional amendment and should be considered by us.