

was one of several states that did not allow for payment of petition circulators. We were a state that had the philosophy, one which I agreed with, that if a citizen has an interest in circumventing the legislative process, going around the legislative process, to enact legislation when we are not being responsive to them, then them exercising their right, or when they disagree with something we have done, passing a referendum petition ought to be a right that they have, but it ought to be one that is a genuine people's movement, a grass roots movement, that the citizens of the state because of their inbred concerns come forward and carry the petitions. That has been the history of Nebraska. Some states have found that their ban on petition circulators has been declared unconstitutional. It has been declared a violation of free speech, that an individual ought to have the right to use their private funds to impact upon the process. So a few years ago our court declared petition carriers and the payment of petition circulators to be a right that the citizens have. As a Legislature, we responded by simply repealing. We had talked in Government Committee, and I know Senator Baack chaired the Government Committee at that time, we talked in Government Committee about modifying our regulation, and we decided we would just repeal any regulation on payment of petition circulators, and that is what we have done. We have now gone through one election cycle. We have had two cases of paid petition circulators, one dealing with the repeal of LB 1059; the other dealing with the video lottery, state lottery, I don't want to get into a big debate about what that should have been called or what that was called, but we have had two cases where paid circulators were being used. What I am suggesting is we need to, because it is a court mandate, we need to maintain the right of the people to pay circulators to carry petitions, and we are doing that with this bill, but it is time to place a degree of regulation back into the process. The regulation that I am talking about is one where instead of having the circulators paid on a basis of head count, a bounty system is how I refer to it, that they be employees; that we regulate this business of petition circulators like we do many other businesses in the state and we require that at least a minimum wage be paid. Why do we need to do that? I think with the current system where the premium is on the number of petitions that an individual can get signed, the number of signatures that they can get, and that is how they get their wage, there is not an emphasis on genuine popular understanding of what the proposal involves. There is an emphasis on getting that person to sign. I know in my home community, during