

SPEAKER BAACK: Senator Wesely.

SENATOR WESELY: Thank you. LB 503 is a very important piece of legislation and I'm not sure how far we're going to proceed with it considering the number of people gone, but let me try to begin to address the issues involved. One of my first years in here, in 1979, one of the biggest issues facing the Health and Human Services Committee was carryover issue dealing with the opportunity of the optometric profession to use eye drops. It was opposed at that time by the ophthalmologists. The purpose was for diagnostic uses and it was a hard fought battle. I recall it very vividly as I was perhaps the swing vote on the committee and was lobbied heavily by both sides. Actually not much changes over time. I feel, again, lobbied heavily by both sides only this time we've gone past the question of using eye drops for diagnostic, but we have expanded over the years the opportunity for optometrists to use those eye drops in addition to therapeutic uses and now the issue before us is to expand that use to allow for the use of eye drops or pharmaceutical agents for glaucoma treatment. The onward push for expanded scope of practice for the optometrists continues and is a very important topic once again before this Legislature. In addition the bill and the amendment deals with the question of removal of superficial foreign bodies which I think is an amendment pretty much agreed to by both the optometrists and ophthalmologists. The difference of opinion between the two as to what the ultimate scope of practice for optometrists should be, as I say, has been a running battle now over these many years, the optometrists seeking to expand their scope, the ophthalmologists seeking to contain it. This bill is no different in that issue only perhaps the specifics are changed. What we did was in the Health and Human Services Committee is once again consider the circumstances and try to achieve some sort of compromise on the issue and that is what the amendment before you attempts to do. The amendment does scale back dramatically the bill and does make changes that are objectionable to the optometrists in a number of fashions. At the same time the ophthalmologists have also felt that they have given ground and have made some compromising efforts because their feeling is the status quo is to be maintained and they would rather not have any expand of scope but at this time the amendment offered is essentially one drafted by the ophthalmologists and does provide a number of things including the opportunity for an optometrist under the supervision of an ophthalmologist to utilize pharmaceutical